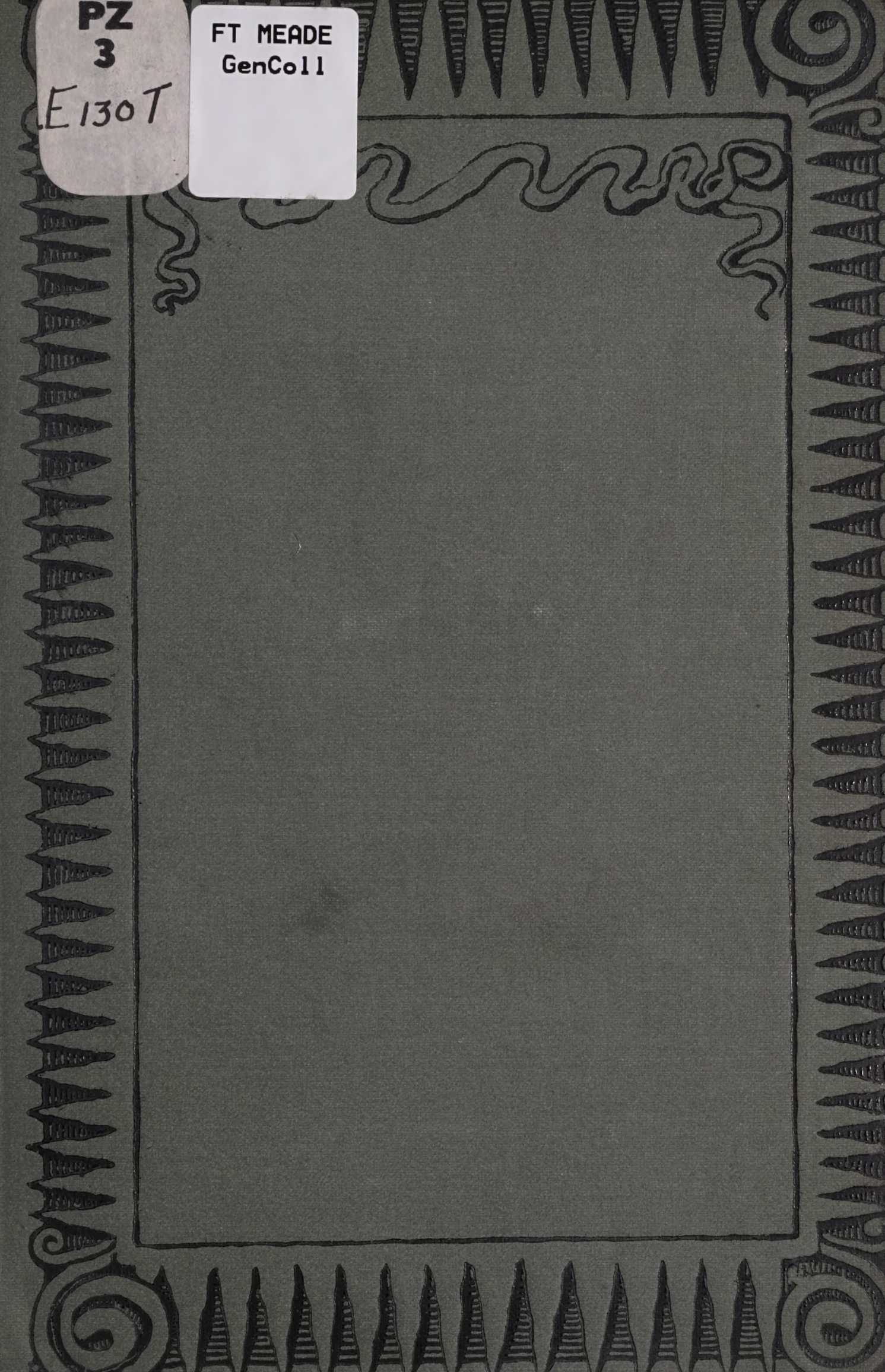


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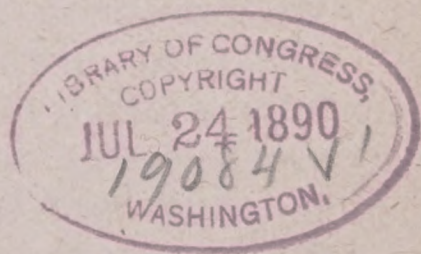
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THEOPHILUS WALLOP

A ROMANTIC HISTORY OF A COUNTRY NEIGHBORHOOD

BY
JOHN R. EAST
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA



NEW YORK
JOHN B. ALDEN, PUBLISHER
1890

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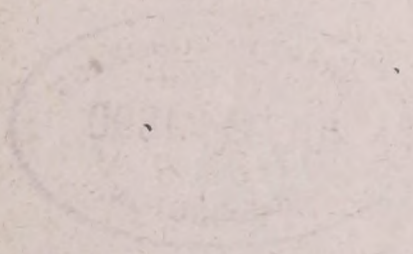
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WASHINGTON, D.C.

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THEOPHILUS WALLOP.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE the huge forests of Southern Indiana were but partly removed, and while the deer, wolf, and wild turkey were yet inhabitants thereof, Jonathan Clayborn, whose wife had died and been buried beneath the pines of old Virginia, in the company of an unmarried and aged sister, took his two little children and sought a new home in the then sparsely settled "Hoosier State." He first purchased eighty acres of land, built a rude log house, and began a pioneer life some forty miles east of the Wabash River.

He wore away the deep grief occasioned by the loss of a beautiful and model wife, by sturdy blows in a successful effort to fell the forest and reduce the wild, but fertile soil to a state of cultivation. After a few years of hardships, inconvenience, toil, and patient economy, which always fall to the lot of the advance men of civilization, he found himself in reasonably good circumstances. Being a man of steady habits, of strong physique, and industrious, he soon added to his possessions and cleared away quite a nice body of farm land.

Other emigrants and settlers had also gathered around him, among whom was Anthony Wallop, who had disposed of his property to a

considerable extent, in the far-off State of Connecticut, and purchased quite a nice piece of rich timbered land within a few miles of Mr. Clayborn. Mr. Wallop was possessed of considerable cash, and he, too, in a few years, had his farm in a good state of cultivation.

These two men became neighbors, for in those days neighborhoods were extended over more territory than at present. Mr. Clayborn was some ten years younger than Mr. Wallop. He was a tall, well-built man with iron-gray hair that hung down behind his ears, which he could readily replace by a sudden toss of his head. He had a warm, generous nature, a kind heart, and took great pride and pleasure in entertaining his few visitors in real Virginia style. He built an extra room to his house for the accommodation of the stranger who not unfrequently enjoyed his hospitality while *en route* to enter land for his future home.

Mr. Wallop was of quite a different disposition. He was like his neighbor, tall, but slender, slim-visaged, and slightly stooped. His eyes were very dark and close together, while he carried a sharp chin and nose. He was in a manner peculiar, but upon the whole, a quiet, good citizen. He had some odd notions about men and things, but his two leading hobbies, if we may call them such, were his ideas of discipline in family government and the accumulation of wealth. The man who accumulated wealth, in his judgment, embodied most of the elements of greatness; and the child that was not ruled by discipline was sure to go to ruin. He had lived under the old rules of strict despotic government as to children, and where moderate chastisement as to the wife was sometimes not out of the way.

In fact, he had taught Mrs. Wallop that he, Anthony, was the head of the family; and the good woman had long since learned not to cross him. He never laughed, and the nearest approach to it was a kind of wheezing chuckle which sometimes escaped him at some of his own peculiar sayings.

He was the father of two children, Samuel and Theophilus. The mother was kind and affectionate, and had she had a chance, would have been a most companionable woman. Samuel had inherited his father's qualities and bore a striking resemblance to him. Theophilus, although at this time very young, was developing a disposition and nature so unlike that of his brother and father, that one would hardly think they were any kin whatever.

Mr. Clayborn had two children, Nellie and Joseph, both old enough to go to school; but owing to the recent settlement there was no suitable building and teachers were exceedingly scarce. Mr. Clayborn had determined, however, to get his neighbors to join him in building a schoolhouse, and then to secure the services of a teacher if possible.

With these worthy objects in view, he visited Mr. Wallop to enlist his services in the enterprise. He found that gentleman engaged in building an addition to his crib, an improvement necessary to garner the large yield of corn produced during the season.

"Good morning," said Mr. Clayborn, as he approached his neighbor.

"Howdy do?" said Mr. Wallop, looking up from his work in a quiet manner.

"How are your concerns?" said Mr. Clayborn, cordially extending his hand.

“Purty well, I believe,” said he, not quite understanding him. “How’s yourn?”

“We are all able to be about.”

Here Mr. Wallop resumed his work, while his neighbor glanced about him, meditating as to how he should best approach the subject. In looking toward the house he noticed the children peeping around the corner at them, and said: “Mr. Wallop, I see that you, like myself, have some children large enough to go to school, if we had the opportunity of sending them.”

“Yes, I have two children, but I don’t know whether larnin’ would do any good or not,” said Mr. Wallop, laying down his axe.

“I should regret very much if my children should never go to school,” was the reply.

“O yes, I reckon it does ’em some good sometimes, when they’re too young to work, but when they get purty near grown, about graduatin’ time, you can’t manage ’em,” said Mr. Wallop, emphatically.

“O well, I think we owe it to our children to give them at least the rudiments of an education.”

“Good trainin’ of children beats rudiments, for I’ve tried both.”

Mr. Clayborn could not help laughing at the last remark, but fearing it might offend his neighbor, he good naturedly replied that he had not had as much experience as some in such matters, but would like to try one term of school at least.

“’Sperience, did you say, in such matters? Wall, I reckon I’ve had ’sperience enough. Thar was my brother Joel, who sent his son, nearly grown at the time, to a graduatin’ grammar school back in Connecticut, and my brother

had me to go and hear his son Dan'l parse—I believe he called it—on the last day of the term. Well, I goes along with him, and thar stood a whole class of big boys and gals, and right thar, before his daddy, when it come Dan'l's turn to say his lesson, he begun to say as fast as he could talk: 'I love, you love, we love, they love;' and all this time a big, ugly, cross-eyed gal, a-blushin' and lookin' him in the face, and him a-castin' sheep's eyes at her. I said to Joel, 'You ort to have better sense than to send your boy to a courtin' school;' and he laughed at me and called me an ignorant-rammis, and I got distrusted at the whole thing and left."

Mr. Clayborn was not much surprised at the ignorance of his neighbor, but was determined, if possible, to get his aid in the enterprise; and now being better acquainted with his peculiarities than ever before, he determined to approach him from a different standpoint, consequently he said. "Mr. Wallop, you certainly did not get a good opinion of grammar schools while you lived in Connecticut. We could not have one here if we wanted it; but do you not think you would like for your children to be able to read, write, and count interest?"

"Count intrust, did you say? Well—yes, that would do purty well, if they got the proper trainin'."

"I guess it would help you somewhat if the boys could count the interest on your notes, sometimes."

"Yes, I have some money at intrust and can't count it up right unless it comes out in even months or years; for when Sol Bruce paid me his last note I lost seven days intrust, because the old woman and me couldn't count it

up, and the note was for twenty-seven dollars too !”

Mr. Clayborn, thinking that he had struck the right chord, said :

“If all us neighbors will join together, we can soon build a schoolhouse and get a teacher who can teach our children to read, write, and cipher ; what do you say, Mr. Wallop, will you help us ?”

Now Mr. Wallop was not the kind of a man to accept any proposition without first counting up the probable cost, and weighing the matter in its financial results. He therefore placed his hand to his forehead and reflected a while before giving his assent to the proposition. To him it involved an outlay of something like a half-dollar for books ; the teacher would have to be paid something for his time, and then the further question, as to whether any teacher could be had who could properly govern the children and grown-up young men of the neighborhood, was to be considered. He finally agreed, however, that if all his neighbors would help, he would join them.

Mr. Clayborn soon obtained the consent of all concerned, and by general agreement the building was erected on his lands. It was put up in a single day, of rough timbers, the roof being put on out of clapboards, and the crevices “chinked” and “daubed” with clay. The inside furniture consisted of benches made of timbers split open in the middle, and legs put in them. A large fireplace was built in the side wall, and the house was ready for use.

Mr. Clayborn had secured the services of a sallow, slender-faced individual, who claimed that he had taught one school in the blue grass regions of Kentucky, as teacher of a three

months school, beginning the 15th day of December. He was to teach reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic to the double rule of three, at the rate of one dollar per pupil, and to "board round among the scholars."

A subscription paper was taken round for the purpose, the names of nineteen pupils were subscribed, and the new teacher, Mr. Israel Long, was hired to teach the first school ever taught in the Clayborn schoolhouse. Now it was well understood that Mr. Long was not one of "those fine-haired" graduates of an eastern grammar school who had acquitted himself with honors; but he was a good speller, could read any book upside down, and cipher to "fare-you-well." At least, such was the reputation Mr. Long had given himself. But nevertheless he was a tender, dyspeptic youth of twenty-three summers and one extra fall. He carried a first-class pen-knife, and boasted that he could "make the finest goose-quill pen of any man in the universe."

The art of teaching school in any community is not possessed by every person, and the incidental duty of keeping first-class order and governing the school is not always without difficulty, especially among raw recruits who are unused to confinement and study. The school was to open, however, on the following Monday, and Mr. Long looked upon the coming event with a feeling of pride and pleasure,

CHAPTER II.

MONDAY morning early, Israel Long took a small copy of Webster's Abridged Dictionary under his left arm and started down the path to the schoolhouse, where had already gathered

several of the larger boys from fifteen to nineteen years of age. These boys had concluded to kill two birds with one stone, by going a "coon hunting" before day and then winding up the sport by attending school.

To say that the new teacher felt the great weight of responsibilities which rested on him at this moment would but feebly express his feelings; for not only did he feel the importance of the occasion, but he indulged his imagination with the great future, and could plainly see unborn generations doing homage to a great man who had started on his road to fame from the "Clayborn schoolhouse."

The craze for the latest fashions does not seize a pioneer neighborhood with the same rapacity it usually takes hold of the "upper crust" of society in the populous cities. The style of dress, sometimes, is of great advantage to a person just entering a circle of new acquaintances; again, the style worn may throw some obstacles in the way of success to popular favor, and especially so where they are unusual among new associates. Mr. Long had a habit of wearing his hat on one side of his head, by which he made a great mistake as a teacher in this particular neighborhood. He wore a pair of very tight-fitting pantaloons, which to a man six feet high and weighing one hundred and twenty pounds, made him look entirely too much like a live pair of stilts to bring forth words of compliment from his new pupils.

But there was such a dignified look of pale seriousness about him as to restrain for the time being any rude conduct on the part of those assembled. He bowed gracefully as he passed in at the door, and proceeded at once to build a fire in the long space left in the wall for that

purpose. In the meantime, the boys on the outside were discussing the general appearance of their new teacher in terms anything but complimentary. Jesse Taylor said that he was the first live ghost he had seen in the daytime. Tom Jones gave it as his deliberate opinion that Mr. Long had been "melted and run into his breeches." Jim Logan declared that it was the first time he had ever seen a grasshopper going on two feet, while Dick Stephens ran up to the door and shouted in a loud voice, "KANGA-ROO!" Mr. Long heard a great deal of loud laughing, but did not suspect that he was the subject or the cause of the merriment. His mind was engaged in the best mode to open the school and classify the scholars.

All the pupils were present, except two, armed and equipped with a spelling-book, and two young men each with a piece of broken slate. At Mr. Clayborn's suggestion the teaching of penmanship had been postponed until after some progress had been made in spelling.

Mr. Long, in a voice like a compound between a human wheeze and the squall of a house cat, said: "Come to books!" at which they all came into the room, and began to look at him as much as to say, "What comes next?" He then arranged all the boys on one side of the room and the girls on the other. Then, in a deep, sepulchral voice, he read the seven rules of school as follows:

1. Pupils must spell out loud, and if they do not study will be placed on the dunce-block to be laughed at.

2. No whispering or talking allowed except at play-time.

3. No fighting or quarreling allowed.

4. You must not call any by nick-names.

5. No love-letters allowed between boys and girls.

6. For breaking rules first time, go on dunce block.

7. For breaking rules second time, use the switch.

He next proceeded to place each student in proper position. This consisted in causing every one to sit erect with both feet on the floor, except the smaller ones, whose feet hung loosely and dangling beneath the bench. Each was required to use a "thumb-paper" and keep his book right side upwards.

It occurred to the mind of Mr. Long that it would be best to instruct the younger pupils first, and accordingly he took little Nettie Burton on his knee and asked her in real Kentucky style if she knew her "lettuz," to which she promptly responded, "No, do you?" Now of course this answer was a little hard on the teacher, and was the occasion for a general titter around the room, which caused Mr. Long to flush up in the face: but he said nothing except to admonish the school that laughing was not allowed.

There is something peculiar about pupils laughing in school. A scholar who could not be made to laugh out of the schoolroom even by the most comic performance, will almost "split his sides" at the most trifling incident the moment he is put under restraint in that regard. The appetite for giggling and the contagion following it, is one of the difficulties in keeping order. It is a pleasant malady, however, usually brought on by some slight cause, but often spontaneous, beginning with a smile or a grin, then a giggle, a ha-ha and finally winding up with a regular convulsion accompa-

nied with tears. It is so catching that when we see a fellow in a paroxysm of laughter, we immediately enter the contest and join the procession.

But there are exceptions to this rule, for there are those who are so deadly in earnest about the things of this life, that a monkey might exhaust itself upon them without producing a ripple across their faces; Mr. Long belonged to this class, and regarded laughing in school as a grievous offense. It was comparatively easy, however, for him to maintain order in this regard, for his stern features, sad complexion, and cold nature would have had almost as much effect on a genial soul as water would on fire. There is a novelty about the first few days of a new school which in a measure contributes to the enforcement of good government; but as teacher and pupil become used to each other, and the days grow long and weary, the disposition to break the temporary imprisonment of the schoolroom is more manifest, and especially so among boys who have grown to fifteen and sixteen years of age in the open air without the restraint of school government.

At the beginning of the second week, Mr. Long was not able to detect any great amount of thirst for knowledge on the part of his pupils; in fact, the alphabet to the young Hoosier minds then in his keeping was a puzzle indeed.

He struggled on till late in the third week, when he made the discovery that the four largest boys could read words of one syllable by spelling them through, while his aid was necessary in pronouncing them; the younger class had learned the alphabet down to the letter Q, and Theophilus Wallop could say his letters backwards with his eyes shut.

A new difficulty now threatened the Clay-born school, for not only had the epidemic of laughing seized the pupils, but it had got into the minds of the five larger ones that it would be a good plan to get the teacher out coon hunting some night and "regulate him." Consequently the matter had been talked quietly around but as it would be some time in maturing, Jesse Taylor proposed that if some trouble could be raised that afternoon, he would "lick" the teacher if the other boys would stand by him. It was arranged to bring on the disturbance by degrees, and immediately after playtime Taylor deliberately stuck a pin in little Dick Spooner, who sprang to his feet and yelled "OUCH" so loud as to startle both teacher and pupils.

Mr. Long, however, was not surprised, for he had in a measure been put on his guard. He had overheard Taylor remark to his fellows that if the Kentucky grasshopper undertook to punish him, he would find that he had jumped on a "hoss." Besides, Mr. Wallop had given him one of his peculiar lectures on "trainin'." His son Samuel had told him that Jim Logan had thrown paper wads at him when his back was turned, and that bad order prevailed in the school generally. This, with other symptoms of insurrection, had determined him to resort to more radical measures, consequently that very morning he had placed a *very* large beech switch in the corner of the room for instant use; and on hearing young Spooner's cries, he sprang for the weapon, but it had mysteriously disappeared. Of course he was nonplussed and enraged, and his effort to find the switch caused a general titter, which was entirely too much for his dyspeptic nature. Accordingly he seized

little Dick by the ear and led him to the dunce-block, where he cried most piteously. A little girl also set up a plaintive wail, which caused Theophilus Wallop to go at once to the teacher and tell him that it was Jesse Taylor who had caused the whole trouble.

At this, Mr. Long turned paler than usual, sprang at Taylor with great ferocity, grabbed him by his long, uncombed hair, hurled him bodily against the low ceiling overhead, dragged him back to his seat, and with the calm remark that "another trick like that, and he would certainly be punished," slowly went back to his accustomed place, relieving his fingers of odd bunches of Taylor's foretop. He released little Dick from his unenviable position and apologized for the mistake.

Taylor was much crestfallen, and sat for an hour or so trembling with fear, for he had suddenly changed his mind as to his ability to "lick" the Kentuckian; but he was sullen and determined to have revenge.

At the close of the school hour, Mr. Long, in a very earnest manner, stated that the *person who had taken his switch* would be punished for it, and a close observer would have noticed that Jim Logan was somewhat interested in the remark.

The fact of the rough handling Taylor had received at the hands of the teacher was much discussed among the patrons of the school; and had it not been for the fact that he had mistreated nearly all the boys of his acquaintance, and was known to be a tough youth, it would probably have cost Mr. Long his position as teacher; but as it was, he was generally tendered a vote of thanks for his effort to keep order.

The plot to get Mr. Long out coon hunting

and even up matters, was by no means given up, and it was arranged to go on the second night following the occurrence just mentioned. Mr. Long, who was on the alert, by a little strategy became aware of their purpose, and proposed to foil them. In the meantime he had ascertained that it was Logan who had taken his switch. He readily assented to the proposed hunt, but good naturedly made an appointment to meet Logan on the night preceding at the house of a neighbor, to give him his first lessons in penmanship. Young Logan, who was living with a distant relative, in order to fill his engagement, which was to occur after dark, had to go through a piece of dark woods to reach the place. There is to certain persons, especially young people, a kind of dread or horror at passing alone through dark woods; not that they are afraid of ghosts or anything of that kind, but it is so lonely! And so felt Jim Logan on this occasion. He was just stepping across the little ravine, when a monster dressed in white rushed quickly upon him from the rear, tied his hands behind him, and without uttering a word, pointed in the direction of the school-house some half-mile distant. Poor Logan! He thought his last hour had come.

From the instant of the first assault, he felt the earth, as he imagined, giving away beneath his feet, while his heart was thumping away at his ribs at a fearful rate. For some moments he was motionless and his tongue seemed paralyzed. He finally made an effort to hollow, but instantly a great white hand was clasped over his mouth and face, which almost took his breath. He then lost hope and surrendered to his fate. He began to think of all the mean

things he had ever done, and for a moment engaged in silent prayer; but he was even denied this last comfort, for the monster hurried him away toward the schoolhouse, and soon his trembling form had reached the playground where he was halted by a terrific jerk at his collar. Then followed a moment of awful silence, when the great monster in front of him unloosed his hands and whispered, "Show me your master's switch!"

Logan, without responding, led his ghost-ship some little distance and reaching beneath a log produced the lost switch, when he was ushered into the log school building, and again the monster whispered into his ear telling him to use it on his own person, which command he obeyed until he was motioned to desist. He was led to the corner of the room, and in the same mysterious whisper directed to place the weapon there. He was now taken to the road again, and after several unintelligible movements on the part of his tormentor, he was directed to run to his home with all possible speed and be ready for the hunt on the following evening. Suffice it to say that he obeyed that part of the command which directed a hasty retreat. With him it was a dash for liberty, and the fleetness of a bird can only be compared to his speed as he flew down the road, bounding over the rough and frozen ground. It may be imagined that for once in his life the Kentucky school teacher indulged in a dark and gloomy smile.

When school opened next day, there was one absent scholar in the person of Jim Logan, but all was quiet. As usual, the ghost story was told with all its horrors, and even the custom

of coon hunting was broken up for the winter. Somehow or other the teacher's name got mixed up in the matter, but he taught out the school where Theophilus Wallop received his first lessons.

CHAPTER III.

"THEOPHILUS," said Anthony Wallop, while taking down from over the front door a long, well-trimmed switch, "I'll learn you better than to steal water-millions from the neighbors while your mother and me are gone to church:" and suiting the action to the word he at once proceeded to give his youngest son what he termed a "first-class dressin'." During this interesting ceremony, not uncommon with Mr. Wallop, his little son, on whose shoulders and back the limb fell hard and fast, writhed in agony and begged in piteous tones to be freed from the torture; but not until many bruises and marks had been left on his little body was he allowed to take his seat and sob away the pain inflicted. His brother Samuel had witnessed the punishment with a degree of interest peculiar to one of his make-up.

"Samuel," said Mr. Wallop, "when you see that youngster at his devilment again, just let me know, for I intend to give him the proper trainin'."

"All right, pap," said his eldest, and the old man with a consciousness of well-performed duty took a stroll to the field near by.

"It was you that took the melon," said "Thof,"—as he was usually called for short,—after some effort between his sobs.

"Well, you got the lickin'," said his brother, and again the little fellow burst into tears.

Thus ended one of those domestic scenes common to the Wallop household, all of which grew out of the simple fact that Samuel at the age of twelve, had taken his brother, two years his junior, into the adjoining field of a Mr. Ward, purloined a green melon, of which they both had eaten, and Samuel in great haste informed his father that Theophilus had done the deed, and he had caught him in the act.

The above incident will illustrate in a measure the difference in the dispositions of these two brothers. Samuel, as has before been stated, was like his father in a great measure. He was shrewd, unscrupulous, avaricious, and truthful only when a falsehood would not serve his purpose. He was extremely selfish, self-willed, and cunning. At home he managed somehow to get all his brother's trinkets and small valuables for a trifle. If Theophilus became the possessor of a marble, a new toy, or a few cents in money, his brother in a few hours would be the owner. At home he kept his father posted as to all the bad things Theophilus did, and a great many things he did not do; while at school he was equally busy in keeping up trouble between the pupils and teacher. He was his father's favorite, possessing, as he thought, many qualifications indicating a successful career.

On the other hand, Theophilus was a generous little soul; usually good natured and easily imposed upon, he allowed his brother to have his own way without hindrance. He was careless about his personal appearance, usually going with one suspender, shoes down at the heel, and pantaloons out at the knee. He could throw a stone with great accuracy, however, and kill a grasshopper at long range. He loved

sport, and had the best reputation in the neighborhood for fighting bumble-bees. When quite young he was so homely that no one would kiss him but his poor old grandmother. At school, though not persevering, he was quick to learn, and usually stood pretty well up in his class; but in those days when the scholars were few, and methods of teaching were in a crude state, this was no particular honor, as was illustrated by Mr. Clayborn's question to him on one occasion.

"Where do you stand in your class, Theophilus?" he asked.

"Next to head," said Theophilus with a grin.

"Good! my little fellow, here's a sixpence to encourage you."

"Thank ye," said the boy, as he fumbled the coin in his fingers.

"How many are in your class?" said Mr. Clayborn, reflectively.

"Me an' another boy," said he, and he gave Mr. Clayborn such a comic look that notwithstanding his discomfiture he said to himself that the boy would make his mark in the world.

Not long after the above occurrences, the traveling minister, Bro. Jehu Thornbush called at the Wallop residence, according to the custom of pioneer days, with his little hymn-book bound in red; and after services and dinner, which always came close together, Mr. Wallop and the pious man engaged in a long conversation as to the best mode of training children. The minister, of course, believed in strict discipline. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was a theme dwelt on long and eloquently by him. To his cultivated mind the young boy possessed

so much of the ferocity of the lower order of animals, and his nature was so impregnated with the elements of total depravity, that nothing was so wholesome and refining in its influences as the switch. Then, in addition to this, it was a convincing method of higher power, and brought them to the feet of their superiors. Humility, he said, was one of the great principles taught in the Bible, and if you could humiliate children in early life, they were likely to remain so after maturity. Besides, it instils into their young natures a kind of fear of you which breeds humility, and humility breeds respect, lasting and enduring.

This last and clinching argument so excited Mr. Wallop that he at once arose and took down the familiar "hickory" from above the door, and exhibited it to his guest to convince him that he was not without the most approved method of "trainin'" the youth. It was a well-seasoned sprout, and bore evidence of frequent use, as the small end was splintered and broken off.

While this animated discussion was going on, Theophilus, out of mere curiosity, had picked up the little red hymn-book, and was making a critical inspection of its contents, and was so engaged when the minister was in the act of leaving. Again the genius of Samuel was made manifest, for he at once bore tidings to the good man that Theophilus had stolen it, and as proof, pointed to the spring house where he was deliberately turning its pages. The minister cast his eyes on the wayward boy for a moment, shook his head in a solemn manner, and then looked squarely at Mr. Wallop, who was already drawing his switch through his left

hand. The two exchanged glances, when Mr. Wallop sternly commanded Theophilus to come to him, at which the little fellow ran as fast as he could, pale and tremulous, and handed the book to its owner.

Of course it would not do to allow an offense so serious to go unpunished, and especially so in the presence of so distinguished a guest. Mr. Wallop proceeded at once to the parental duty of "trainin'" his undutiful offspring, and the ease and grace with which he wielded the rod, and the vigor and animation manifested during the exercise, was entirely satisfactory to the aforesaid minister, who smiled religiously throughout the entertainment.

Poor Theophilus ! He had been many times, ere this, introduced to this kind of proceeding, and he had, in a manner, become used to it, like a horse to being curried, but he had never before been called upon to gratify the feelings of his father and so distinguished a person as the traveling minister, and he certainly felt that he was doing double duty. His cries were excruciating, his movements that of one standing on coals of fire, and it seemed that his father would never stop. Samuel wore his usual grin, but Mrs. Wallop wiped her eyes with her apron and turned her back on the scene.

At the end of this proceeding, more interesting to Theophilus than to the reader, he was allowed to crouch his bruised body down in the corner, and remain choking back his sobs as best he could until the holy man took his leave. He heartily congratulated Mr. Wallop upon his executive ability in rearing a family, and was lavish in his encomiums on Mrs. Wallop for

her good fortune in securing such a model husband.

Words of fatherly kindness were given Samuel for his vigilant watch over the shortcomings of his brother, and he was admonished to promptly report all acts of disobedience on the part of that brother with a view to his final reformation. To Theophilus he was more direct, and after taking him by the hand, said: "Naughty and dissolute boy, your kind and benevolent earthly parent has very kindly in my presence taught you over again the Bible injunction, 'Thou shalt not steal.'" Theophilus was about to say that he had not stolen the hymn-book, but suddenly remembering that there was something over three feet of the switch left, he wisely held his tongue. "I hope," continued the minister, "that you will remember your father's kindness and grow up to be a better man than you are a boy." And with these consoling remarks, he moved on his journey in an effort to convert the pioneers of Southern Indiana.

As soon as the minister was gone, Theophilus hurried away to the big apple-tree in the orchard, where he often went after his father had beaten him. Here it was that he brooded over his injuries, and in his inmost soul almost cursed the switch and the hand that used it. Although young, his mind and heart were in a state of rebellion against his home, and he would ask himself how long would he be thus mistreated? He knew that he was not a thief, and wondered whether other fathers beat their boys for trifling offenses like his father beat him. Some hours later, when he returned to the house, he noticed that his mother had tears

in her eyes, and when they looked in each other's faces, both began to weep afresh, but nothing was said as to the cause, for they well knew what it was.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME years passed without much change in the relations of the household, and Theophilus suffered himself to be imposed upon by his brother because of the kindness of his mother. During the winter months both boys attended school and farmed in the interim. It was in school where "Thof" saw his best days in early life. He became a good speller, and was a champion at the game of "bull-pen" and "town-ball." There was but one pupil who was anyways his equal at a spelling-match, and that was Nellie Clayborn; the two contestants often standing on the floor for an hour without missing a single word. Many were the times that Theophilus and Nellie divided the school by tossing up the broom for first choice, each placing one hand above the other till the last hand that could hold the handle would win.

Nellie Clayborn possessed a beautiful form, a round plump face, beautiful white teeth, a coal-black eye, a rosy cheek, and a disposition as sweet as the blooming flowers; while Theophilus, with his big, awkward form, stooped shoulders, long Roman nose and awkward manner, standing by her side, made a contrast really laughable. Both were too young to think of love affairs, yet he often wished he had a sister that looked just like her. The little sunshine of life which overtook Theophilus was away from home, for as he grew nearer

manhood he hated the door of his home, over which rested the detested switch. He had but little affection for his brother and avoided his company whenever possible to do so.

One little incident, however, for a time gave him some neighborhood popularity. How the custom originated we do not know, but it was regarded by all well-regulated schools as a very grievous offense for an outsider to hollow "School Butter!" at the attendants. On one occasion, Jerry Halter, who at that time was not an attendant, was passing the school, when he yelled at the top of his voice, "SCHOOL BUTTER!" which instantly brought the entire school to the door to see who it was who had so grossly insulted them.

Theophilus, on discovering Halter, sauntered up to him, and in language befitting a Brigadier-General, commanded him to apologize for this insult. Halter gave Theophilus a look evidently mingled with disgust and pity, and sized him up as a half lunatic. "Who are *you*?" said he. "I am Theophilus Wallop, as you know, and stand at the foot of my class, except when such fellows as you come along, when I go to the head; and as a pupil of Mr. Betterman, who teaches in District No 2, I command you, in the name of the school here assembled, to take back what you said, or take the consequences." "Wa-a-ll, Mr. Theophilus Wallop," said Halter, "I'll give you to understand that I don't take take back nothin' I say, and if that don't suit you, you young freckle-faced idiot, I'll 'wallop' you, and clear out the whole school in less than no time." At which the boy showed no signs of fear, but laughed in Halter's face, and with a grin like a monkey,

inquired whether he cleaned out whole schools at a time as a business, or whether he did it for mere amusement. This so enraged Halter that he gave him a rap over the head, at which Theophilus first laughed out loud, but reduced the laugh to a peculiar grin, finally winding up with a very red face and a low shake of the head, indicative of a gathering storm of anger.

All the boys laughed at "Thof's" awkward predicament, and Halter regarding himself quite a hero, seized him by his somewhat prominent nose, and was proceeding to lead him like an animal, but just then Theophilus gave him a heavy blow in the region of his breakfast which sent him to the ground where he lay almost lifeless and gasping for breath. A great shout of applause went up for young Wallop, and many of the heretofore timid ones rushed forward, spitting upon their hands, pulling off their coats, and manifesting many signs of desperation. Theophilus here became somewhat alarmed, for fear he had killed the fellow and would be hung for murder. Halter, however, soon began to recover, making some gestures which caused the boys who were so anxious for blood a few moments before to beat a hasty retreat for the schoolhouse.

Theophilus, seeing that Halter was yet flat on his back, gathered one of his feet under each arm, started down a slight declivity, and cried out, "all that want to ride, just get on the wagon!" and quite a number took advantage of the excursion rates, and almost smothered the breathless fellow, who after being dragged over the rough ground in this manner, was only too glad to secure his liberty by begging the

pardon of the school and saying "Calf rope" three times.

After this heroic vindication of the good name of the school, Theophilus's popularity gained rapidly. Still, like most heroes, he was not allowed to claim the entire honor, for Billy Pate claimed that if he had not hit him the very moment he did, that he, Billy, was going to "floor him with a board," and Charlie Sands "would have killed him sure, if his sister, blast her! had not held him. Joe Burton was just in the act of breaking the fellow's nose while he was lying down, but he commenced to move his foot, and he thought he was going to have a fit, and he did not think it was right to hurt a sick person. Even the model Samuel had snatched a button off the fellow's coat while they were dragging him down the hill, and offered to sell it for a slate-pencil. As is usual with the bystanders in such cases, many of the boys claimed a part in the heroic encounter; but after all, public opinion in the immediate neighborhood gave the credit and honor to Theophilus, who grinned and sauntered awkwardly about as though nothing unusual had happened.

CHAPTER V.

DURING the four years following the incidents described in the foregoing chapter, Theophilus continued on his father's farm and attended school during the winter seasons, becoming one of the best scholars in the neighborhood. He had not improved in his personal appearance to any great extent. He was almost six feet high, broad-shouldered, but slightly

stooped, and the only thing remarkable about his attire was that his pantaloons, which were of the commonest material, were several inches too short, exposing a pair of home-made woollen socks far above his cowhide shoes.

Up to this time, so far as was known, Theophilus was wholly unconcerned as to the many handsome, winning girls with which the country abounded. He cared little for society, and apparently seemed to take pleasure in his own meditations. His impetuous nature revealed his real thoughts, however, as will be seen in the following pages

One morning, while Samuel and Theophilus were repairing some matter about the barn, Samuel, who suspected that his brother entertained, to say the least, a friendly feeling for the very handsome, sweet-tempered girl, Nellie Clayborn, could not resist the temptation to cunningly give him a thrust. Accordingly, after first purposely introducing her name in the conversation, he gave expression to the words, "Nell Clayborn is nothin' but a stuck-up, black-eyed weasel!"

Theophilus's eyes immediately flashed fire at this, and he at once administered a sharp rebuke to Samuel for the use of such language. The hot words which followed between the two gave rise to a trouble which lasted many a long day.

"If Miss Clayborn is proud it is no concern of yours, and it does not justify you in calling her names," said Theophilus in a tone of censure.

"Oh," said Samuel, "you are sweet on her, are you? And you can't hear her name mentioned without flying up like a pump handle!"

"I don't like to hear any one spoken lightly

of who has done you no harm; and as to her personal appearance, if I was a low-browed, narrow-eyed, sharp-nosed, hump-shouldered, knock-kneed, vicious, selfish ape as you are, I would not speak disparagingly of others," said Theophilus, in what was for him quite a burst of passion.

"I don't like the Clayborn family; and if you are gone on this Virginia beauty, you'd better saddle old Gray, and move to the Clayborn mansion where you can enjoy the society of the silly, little giggling——" but Samuel did not close this sentence, for quick as a flash of lightning, Theophilus struck him a blow which caused the blood to stream from his face and sent him sprawling to the floor, when his cries brought Mr. and Mrs. Wallop to the scene. It was a scene, too, that Theophilus never forgot. It was a sad sight for the parents, and if Theophilus could have done so, in five minutes afterward the act would have been undone.

Although he felt that his brother richly deserved all the punishment that he had given him, yet it so deeply grieved his parents, that he was indeed sorry. He remained silent while Samuel gave a horrible and distorted account of a very brutal assault made on him by his brother, which statement was in a measure corroborated by his disfigured countenance which had become swollen and presented an exceedingly unsightly appearance. According to his usual custom he allowed the story to go on almost uncontradicted to his parents. Samuel's presentation of his grievance was both solemn and pathetic, assuming the role of injured innocence. His moans at first were mixed with vengeance, but when his mother called him "poor boy," and his eye caught a fresh drop

of blood, he actually wept bitter tears, and felt very sorry for himself. When he looked in the mirror and saw the mutilated remains of a once sharply, curved and symmetrical nose, he gave vent to a fresh flood of tears in which his mother joined.

Theophilus, who knew that Samuel was playing upon his mother's sympathy, felt a pang of remorse; but the subject out of which the trouble grew was too delicate to be mentioned. So he silently submitted to the severe words of censure from his parents without reply. This course was misconstrued by his father as the external evidence of a callous heart and vicious disposition. To him it manifested a stubbornness which required severe punishment. The father decided that however large Theophilus had grown, his duty was to administer to him a severe flogging for his treatment of Samuel. He thought that not only was the punishment deserved, but that his duty as a parent absolutely demanded it. He was responsible for the bringing up of his boys, and should he fail in this instance, there was no telling what would become of this wayward son in the great future.

The "hickory" still occupied its original place over the front door; accordingly he took it down, drew it threw his hand to ascertain if it was in good order, and then commanded Theophilus to "rise up and take his dressin'." At this remark Samuel seemed partially to recover and cast a triumphal glance at his brother to see how he would receive the injunction. A casual observer could have detected the raging storm of indignation which was manifesting itself in the face of Theophilus at that moment. His frame fairly shook as he sat hesitating to rise from his chair to be beaten as of old. He

had never in his life disobeyed a positive command given by his father, and now, what should he do? He had done many things in his life for which he was sorry and heartily ashamed, but disobedience of this character could not be charged to him. His father sternly commanded him to arise and receive his punishment. He hesitated, and it required a great effort to decide whether at his age,—almost a grown man,—he should submit to further punishment, or whether he should rise, seize the switch and break it in pieces; but his better self prevailed and he compromised with himself on the subject. He determined to submit only on certain conditions. His hesitation only determined the father more to carry out his purpose. He moved forward, repeated the command, demanding why he did not obey. Theophilus rose, with a sad expression on his pale face which astonished even Samuel. There was a fixed determination in his eye which indicated that the scene about to be enacted would be of more than ordinary importance in the affairs of the Wallop family.

Before speaking a word, he lifted his left hand, and then in a very serious voice said: “Father, I know that I have not always been as dutiful as I should have been, and the consciousness of this knowledge has often been a severe punishment to me. Certainly if there is virtue in corporal punishment, you have done your full duty by me in that line. You have, ever since I was a child, taken Samuel’s statements and disregarded mine as to the party in fault. By this means I have suffered for things of which I was not guilty. I have tried to be honest and truthful, have obeyed all your commands, and will do so now, but

my nature will no longer submit to this kind of treatment, and I now present myself to you for the last opportunity you will ever have to strike me."

Mr. Wallop was too much angered to understand the meaning of these words. He did not see the compressed lips, the fixed purpose in the eye, the pale cheek that said too plainly that upon the infliction of a blow the youngest son would leave the home of his childhood never to return. Regardless of consequences, the misguided father inflicted several blows upon the motionless form, one of which lacerated the cheek. All this was received without the movement of a muscle.

At the conclusion of these proceedings Theophilus stepped directly to his mother, and kissing her on the cheek, instantly passed out of the door never to look upon the house of his birth again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE emotions, hopes, and aspirations of a young man at the age of seventeen form a compound of peculiar sensations. It is the time in his life when his imagination is most busy in the construction of air castles for the future. He dreams of a home that shall be his own—and somebody's else. All to him is sunshine, or tinted with the hues of the beautiful bow of promise, at the end of which there is sure to be, for him at least, the "pot of gold," of which he has so often heard in the legends of happy childhood. He begins to plan for himself, and looks forward to the time when he shall bid farewell to the home in which he has spent his childish years.

But by and by he wakes to find that the pillow on which he has so sweetly dreamed of future success in life, and of happiness yet to come in a home far away from his friends, has been made soft and white for him by the hands of a loving mother, and that his home was built by the hard industry of the father. The time has come for him to leave that home, and he mentally lives the scenes of early life over again. He wanders over the green fields and meadows where he has spent most of his youthful days, and the herds, which it has been his task to care for, now seem to be his near friends. He sees the old horse quietly grazing in the distance, and the many journeys to the old mill, and the harvest times in which he and "Old Gray" have been companions now come to his mind, and cause a sad feeling in his heart as he contemplates a final separation. He moves back to the old home to take a final glance, when at the door he is met by the faithful house-dog which gives him his paw, as he has done a thousand times before, as a token of such friendship as only a faithful dumb animal can manifest. Then a manly tear is brushed from his sunbrowned cheek.

The old schoolhouse, with its long train of memories, and the days of joy spent under its roof, are remembered only to add to his sorrow. He remembers all the bright scenes of the past that are connected with his old home and the neighborhood, and cannot suppress a feeling of regret that he must leave all this for other scenes in other lands. Yet if he conceives that he has been injured, and his heart has been repeatedly insulted, especially by

those who should have been his best friends, he lets this feeling outweigh all other considerations, and a point, for weal or woe, is turned in his life.

The foregoing in a measure describes the feelings of our hero for some time prior to the occurrence mentioned in the preceding chapter; and he needed only a stroke like this to decide his future course, and so he immediately started out entirely on his own resources.

When he left home he passed down the road leading by the old schoolhouse, neither knowing nor caring where he was going. He had earned a little money during the last two or three years which he had been allowed by his father to keep as his own, but the thrifty Samuel, by the exercise of his natural talent in that line, had adroitly managed to obtain most of it for a small consideration, so that on this most important occasion he found himself in possession of hard cash to the amount of ninety cents. He wore a slouched hat, a "hickory" checked shirt, a cotton vest, tweed trousers and cow-hide shoes, and carried on his arm a home-made jeans coat. Like the great majority of young men going out to seek a fortune, he had dreamed of the great West, where he would be able to get employment by which he might replenish his finances and buy "store clothes."

His mind was wandering now from the place where he had slept the night before, to the place he might sleep when night should overtake him.

The sun had not yet reached the zenith, and it was one of those beautiful June mornings when fields are green, meadows in full

bloom, when the birds, nature's musicians, are filling the air with their joyous music. Theophilus, however, was not in a poetic mood, and was not affected by the surrounding scenery; he was unconscious of everything except the feeling of deep injury to himself which pierced his soul, and made him feel only as those can who realize that they are the subjects of partial and unjust treatment where they have a right to expect justice and sympathy.

He came near the schoolhouse and sat on a log in the midst of the playground. There is no place that seems so quiet and lonely as a country schoolhouse when school is not in session, and especially so to one whose happiest days have been spent there. He sat for a long time in a contemplative mood, thinking of Billy Sands, Joe Burton, Dick Spooner and others with whom he had had so much fun; but somehow a certain pair of black eyes and the beautiful form of one of the merry-hearted girl schoolmates was constantly monopolizing his thoughts. He could not help wondering now whether *she* would not be sorry when she heard that he was gone.

It was toward noon when Theophilus arose from the log and had fully determined what course he would pursue. He threw his coat upon his arm and took the westward course he had started upon. The scar on his cheek, left by the last blow of the switch, was visible, but it was not so deep as the wound upon his feelings, for while he was not vain as to looks, he was keenly sensitive as to treatment. He walked for some time with his gaze downcast upon the dusty road before him without tak-

ing note of the distance he had traveled. After walking two miles, upon lifting his eyes he saw the top of a barn and a farmhouse which he very well knew was the home of 'Squire Clayborn, as he was called by the neighbors.

The house stood some distance from the road, and for a moment Theophilus wished that he had gone by a different way, for he did not wish anyone to see the scar on his face. Besides he was both timid and exceedingly bashful in the presence of ladies, and the well-known hospitality of 'Squire Clayborn was such that he knew that if he should be seen it would be difficult to pass the house without stopping to dinner. Besides, there was Joe, who would want to know where he was going, what was the matter with his face, and a great many things that Theophilus did not want to tell, and he concluded that he would hurry along, and, if possible, avoid being seen. As he came opposite the house, 'Squire Clayborn and his son came from the field, and were opening the barn gate just as he reached that point.

"Good morning, Theophilus," said 'Squire Clayborn.

"Howd' ye do?" said Theophilus.

"How's all the folks at your house?" inquired the 'Squire.

"Tolerably well," said Theophilus.

"Joe," said his father, "you feed the horses and Theophilus and I will go to the house and see how near dinner is ready."

"Please excuse me," said Theophilus, "I am not hungry, and—"

"I never excuse one of my neighbors from

dining with me. I never take any excuses, you don't pass my house at this time of day without resting up for dinner; we haven't anything extra to eat, but you must help us go through the motions the same as if you were at home."

And so, before Theophilus could even get to speak to Joe, 'Squire Clayborn was conducting him without further resistance to the house.

Just then the dinner-bell rang out and Theophilus caught a glimpse of the form of Nellie. He never could tell why, but he was at once seized with what is well known in the rural districts as "Buck ague"—a kind of spasmodic quivering of the limbs, common among young hunters who are in sight of more game than they can hope to capture. Nellie had also seen him, and she darted into the "best room," and like all good country girls had taken up the broom, swept the room, which was already as neat as need be, rearranged the chairs, and was brushing her pretty golden hair,—that with a perversity of its own wanted to arrange itself in bewitching little rings about her forehead in a manner that would break the hearts of the girls of the present day with envy,—back behind her ears in the prim style thought "proper" by the mothers and aunts of that time. Just then her father entered the room with Theophilus close behind him.

It is but stating the truth to say that from the time our hero had left the road until he reached the house, he had taken a greater interest in his personal appearance than ever before in his life. Somehow, it seemed to him that his pantaloons were shorter than

usual ; that the brim of his dusty hat persisted in flopping down all around. He noticed that three of the five buttons that were formerly on his vest were gone entirely. He placed his thumbs in each pocket, and succeeded in pressing his trousers so far down as to appear more as if they were on good terms with the tops of his shoes ; but in so doing he created a very large space between the waistband and his vest, and he was in the act of compromising the distance when he entered the door. His heart was already thumping like a young steam engine, when to add to his embarrassment Nellie had commenced to sing, in a voice which it seemed to him could not be inferior to that of the famous "Sweedish Nightingale," that popular old negro melody, "Way down upon the Swanee River," to which the excited beating of his heart seemed to keep time, and every word of which he could almost feel coursing through his veins. So absorbed was he, that the doorstep was higher than he anticipated ; his foot caught and he fell at full length almost at her feet. He gathered himself up again in an instant, however, and though very red in the face and quivering throughout his whole frame, stammered out, "Good evening," to which the young lady responded, "I am glad to see you, Theophilus, please be seated." This invitation, given with the native politeness which was characteristic of Nellie Clayborn, was gladly accepted, for he felt that he must either take a seat or fall again, as he felt too weak to trust himself upon his feet. 'Squire Clayborn, noticing his embarrassment, left the room to wash his hands and to prepare for dinner, but

one might have noticed a broad, benevolent smile upon his face. Nellie, also seeing his embarrassment, with woman's tact said: "Please excuse me, Theophilus, till I put the dinner on the table," and with a kind, reassuring smile, intended to place him somewhat at his ease, but which really increased the velocity of his heart-beats to 120 per minute, she left him to his own reflections. His awkwardness became more and more apparent. His first thought was a wish that he had never been born. He looked at his big hands, like two sides of bacon, they seemed to him. His feet, too, seemed to have grown wonderfully since he looked at them last, and he felt that he was the homeliest mortal in human shape. The worst was not over, for he would soon be called to dinner. He had no appetite for food even of the most tempting kind, but he must, in the language of the 'Squire, "go through the motion." He was mentally planning to act as naturally and unconcernedly as possible, and the consoling thought occurred to him that at least during the meal his short pantaloons could not be noticed, as his long legs would be hid under the table. Joe now made his appearance, and Theophilus felt somewhat relieved from his embarrassment. The meeting was that of two country boys who had fished and hunted together almost since their infancy. Seeing the scar on Theophilus's cheek, Joe very naturally asked what was the cause of it. The reply was rather evasive, conveying the impression that it was only the result of a "little trouble he had had with a fellow."

"Oh, you and Jerry Halter have had a scratch," said Joe, laughing.

“Now I am not going to tell you anything more about it,” said Theophilus.

Just then Nellie appeared at the door and said, “Theophilus, you and Joe come out to dinner.”

Theophilus received a warm welcome from Nellie’s aunt, Miss Clayborn. She kindly inquired about his health and that of his mother, to which he responded in the most respectful manner.

Nellie waited on the table with perfect ease and grace, and Theophilus, more than once during the meal, congratulated himself upon the chastisement he had given his brother in her behalf.

The trying ordeal, that of “going through the motion” of dinner, was almost over. It had come the time for pie, without which no country meal can be complete. But alas! Some people are born to be unfortunate, and surely Theophilus was one of these. In helping himself to a piece of this dainty, from a plate held by the plump little hand of Nellie, by an awkward movement he turned over his cup of coffee. The hot liquid was spilled on his knees, and caused him to quickly jump up and endeavor to hold his pantaloons away from the flesh. This was irresistibly comical to Joe, who had a keen sense of the ridiculous. He laughed outright, for which he was reprimanded by his aunt, who hurriedly mopped up the coffee grounds around the plate where Theophilus had been eating. It required quite an effort to get him back to the table, but as he could hide more of his clothing under the table than he could by standing, he took his seat again; but you may be sure that his appetite

had not been at all increased by the accident. When anything was offered him he would say "I won't choose any." He would occasionally look in the direction of Nellie, who had blushed several times on his account, for well she knew that her mischievous brother would tease her about the matter after Theophilus was gone.

When dinner was over, Joe and his father went to the barn, leaving Theophilus in the room where he had met Nellie. He actually despised himself for his awkwardness and felt it his duty to apologize for his behavior if an opportunity offered. He looked in the mirror to see if he really was as repulsive in appearance as he felt himself to be. While looking in the glass he saw the form of Nellie coming through the door. He turned quickly around and said: "I—I—I beg your pardon for my awkwardness at the table." "Oh, never mind that, there was no harm done." She evidently wished to lead his mind away from the subject of his awkwardness. A long embarrassing silence followed, for Theophilus was entirely unused to being alone with a young lady. He knew he ought to say something, but what to say was the perplexing question.

He wanted to tell her that somehow she was very interesting to him, but words seemed powerless to express his thoughts. He half wished for her sake that he had not made up his mind to go away, but what could a girl so beautiful as she who now stood before him care for a big, ugly, awkward boy like him? At length he mustered up courage and said, "I w-want to ask a favor of you; will you grant it?"

“Certainly, if it is in my power,” said she.

“I am going west; will you answer a letter, if I write you, without telling any one where I am?” said he, seriously.

“Of course I will, but tell me why you are going away; we will all miss you so much,” she said in real astonishment.

“Will *you* miss me?” said Theophilus, eagerly.

“Why, we have always been good friends, haven’t we?” said she.

“Yes, we have been schoolmates, but can’t you think enough of me to be—only—I—I mean my best friend?”

This last remark was made with a serious look and embarrassed candor, at the same time extending his big brown hand, into which Nellie placed hers so small and white as to form a striking contrast.

With flushed cheek she replied, “I do not understand you; why do you ask me to be your best friend when you say you are going away, and I may never see you again?”

With a puzzled look into her sweet face, accompanied with an unutterable tenderness that she remembered ever afterwards, he only said, “Will you let me have your picture to take with me?”

“Yes, if that will be any comfort to you,” said the girl, taking a picture from a bureau drawer, and handing it to him. “But tell me why you are leaving your home and going among strangers?”

“I can’t tell you now, but you will perhaps know after I am gone,” and with a gentle pressure of her hand he said “Goodbye!” and walked hurriedly away toward the west.

For the first three or four hours he passed over hills and through valleys familiar to him, but as the sun went down he passed beyond his knowledge of the country. He stopped at night with a farmer, who kindly gave him supper, lodging, and breakfast without charge. Day after day he traveled almost without cost, for it was before the day of "tramps," and when a man as young as he was regarded as an honest man and not a thief. Besides, his honest face and gentlemanly deportment convinced those with whom he came in contact that he was no vagabond or highwayman.

Fortunately for him it was the season of the year when farm laborers were in demand, and several times he could have gotten employment if he had stopped so near home; but he was going west and desired to get as far as he could with the little money he had. Finally on the Monday after his departure he sought employment with a farmer, which he readily obtained, as a harvest hand.

He worked six days and received six dollars for his labor, but during the time of his absence he had not unburdened his mind with regard to the matters at home. After the day's labor was done, and he had retired at night, he would dream that Samuel would creep into his room under the door, carrying vipers which would shoot forth their forked tongues at him and then disappear through the window. Again he would dream of the switch over the door; the same old grievances of Samuel would be told again, and then he would see his father with uplifted switch in hand and his angry face as he let it fall heavily upon his shoulders. He would start quickly,

rise from his pillow, awake and be relieved when he realized that it was only a dream. Sometimes in his sleep he would hear his mother calling him, and see her pale, sad face, as she went to and fro, looking for her boy. Again, as the morning hours drew near, and the more peaceful slumber overtook him, he would dream of resting under the gaze of two dark and beautiful eyes, and of seeing the sweet face of Nellie Clayborn. Sometimes he could hear her voice singing the "Swanee River;" again sometimes she was gathering flowers, but always followed by two figures, one resembling his brother Samuel, the other unknown. These dreams would repeat themselves each night, until weary of them, he determined to move farther west. Consequently he moved again to get beyond his own thoughts and dreams, where we must leave him for the present.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER the sudden departure of Theophilus from his home there was a deep shadow of sadness in the household. For some time the father walked backward and forward across the room, his hands folded in a contemplative mood. His anger was fast disappearing, and it could be readily seen that he was not exactly satisfied with the turn affairs had taken.

He hurriedly reviewed the past, and the very recent words of his youngest son, that he had never disobeyed him, and that he had been partial in his treatment and had always taken the statement of his other son in preference to his, and had unjustly punished him

time and again; all this came slowly back to his mind, and he experienced a feeling very much akin to that of regret.

The mother sat with tearful eyes gazing through the open door, through which her boy had gone out into the great world, too much surprised and shocked to speak. Not a sound was uttered except an occasional groan from Samuel, who thought himself the only abused person and the only one deserving of sympathy; at least he would have liked to convey that impression to the minds of others.

Days and weeks went by, and the shade of sorrow, growing deeper with time, continued to hover about the family.

Mr. Clayborn and his son Joe had no knowledge that Theophilus was finally leaving his home when they last saw him. Nellie was the only person to whom he had told his purpose. His absence was soon noticed, however, and much speculation was indulged in by those of his acquaintance. There was a feeling of regret in the hearts of all, with two exceptions.

Jerry Halter was a big, burly fellow by this time, and since his trouble with Theophilus at school, he had entertained anything but kindly feelings for him. He was now a full-grown man, and on account of the fact that Nellie Clayborn always had a good word for Theophilus, he was ready to go to any extent to do him an injury. And by the way, he seemed to be about the only companion Samuel had among all his acquaintances. These two had formed as close a friendship as was possible for two such natures; a friendship for each other only, forming a small "independent con-

federacy" against the rest of the community in which they lived.

Halter was overbearing, insolent, and vindictive, which rendered him unpopular, consequently he pushed himself along through the world by bluff and bluster. He was not without vanity, and imagined all the girls in the neighborhood would feel greatly flattered to have him for a "beau." On two occasions he accompanied Joe Clayborn to his father's house, and on one of these he managed to get a few words in private with Miss Nellie. She was always social and kind to him as to others, and he took it for granted that she was "dead in love" with him. He invited her to take a walk, and as they strolled together beneath the foliage of the green trees, he was feeling that to be the only son-in-law of 'Squire Clayborn and, to come some day in possession of his farm and other property, wouldn't be a bad thing for him.

Of course he supposed the young girl's heart was free, and if not his already, the mere mention of the matter would settle his happiness for life. There was a lustre and brightness about Nellie's eyes, a dimple on her cheek, and a sweetness in her look, which made the flowers about their pathway fade into insignificance when the fellow undertook to compare them. He would doubtless have proposed to her then and there, but the recent departure of Theophilus Wallop was such a theme for gossip in the neighborhood, that very naturally a part of his thoughts were devoted to him at that time. And, too, it would be better, perhaps, to see that Theophilus was en-

tirely out of the way before making so important a venture.

“You’ve heard about Thof Wallop knocking down his old father and leaving home, I guess?” said he.

“No, I have not,” said she, as she let fall a rose from her hand, looking him steadily in the face.

“Well, I guess it is so, and if he is ever caught he will be *regulated*.”

This meant that he would be taken out by a crowd and beaten with switches.

In a moment Nellie thought of the mark on the cheek of Theophilus the day he left home. She felt a kind of fear creep over her which was undefinable, but concealing this emotion, she asked:

“How did the trouble begin, and who was present to see it?”

“It was a very brutal blow with a piece of timber, and no one saw it but his brother Samuel,” said Halter with a vehemence which indicated some feeling.

“Samuel told you all about it, I suppose?”

“Yes, he saw it all.”

“Was Theophilus hurt in any way?”

“Oh, no; he just struck his father with a piece of timber and left at once.”

Nellie knew the character of Samuel and did not place much confidence in his statements; but this story was in a manner corroborated by the fact of the mysterious leaving of young Wallop. Still the scar on his cheek to her mind contradicted the details just given. She was sorry that such charges had been made, for her father and Joe had always had a good opinion of Theophilus, and she could not

help wishing, somehow, that they might retain it.

Halter noticed that Nellie had ceased her merry laughter, and attributed her seriousness to her interest in Anthony and Mrs. Wallop rather than their son. He wanted to dismiss the subject and return to the line of thought he was in when it was first mentioned, and said :

“The old man will soon be well again, and it is a good thing that the neighborhood has got rid of that cowardly scamp.”

Nellie made no response, but her first impulse was to suggest to Halter that he had changed his mind since he hollowed “School butter” at the school some years before. Several times Halter was on the verge of telling her how near she seemed to him at that moment, but her appearance showed him too plainly that it was a hazardous adventure, and at her suggestion they retraced their steps to the house, where she adroitly turned her escort over to Joe, while she ostensibly went to help her good old aunt.

Jerry did not remain long that evening, for Joe was not so good company as his sister. Though her treatment of him was kind and civil, yet he felt that there was something wanting; it was evident that his society was not altogether pleasant to her. But he had at least made a beginning, and he hoped for better success in the future. He therefore determined to call again when she was in a happier mood.

“Nellie, what is the matter with you this evening? You seem to be studying about

something," said her Aunt Rose, who had noticed that she appeared absent-minded.

"I was just thinking of Mr. Wallop and his family, and what a queer old gentleman he is."

"Yes," said her aunt, "I have lived near them a good while, and I must say he has puzzled me considerably, he is so cold and reserved in his manner; but Mrs. Wallop is such a good, kind soul, and makes one feel at home so much while in her presence, that I would visit her more than I do, but when Mr. Wallop comes into the house, I feel as if a cold wave has struck me, and I want to come away; and she marked the place where she had been reading in the Bible and laid the book on the stand.

"Have you heard that they have had some trouble recently in the family?" said Nellie.

"No, I have not," was the answer.

"You know the day that Theophilus stopped with us for dinner?"

"Yes."

"Well, he was leaving his home for good that day," said Nellie.

"And did you know that all this time without telling me?"

"I did not know that there had been any trouble in the family."

"Well, I believe I do remember seeing a scar on his cheek," said her aunt, while she let her motherly eyes rest on her niece.

"I noticed that," said Nellie, "but of course I did not inquire the cause."

"And did he not tell you he was going away, nor where he was going?"

"Yes," said Nellie, while her cheeks turned red, "he said he was going west."

“To stay?”

“I inferred so,” she answered.

“Well, it always seemed that there was a warm and a cold side to their home, for Samuel and his father are so much alike, while Theophilus seems to have inherited his mother’s good qualities.”

“I never could get acquainted with Samuel at school,” said Nellie, “though I really didn’t care to try, for he wasn’t at all attractive to me.”

“Well, I do not know, of course, but it has been rumored that Mr. Wallop was very severe on his youngest son, and I would not be surprised if that was the cause of his leaving.”

“Theophilus was much the better boy at school,” said Nellie, reflectively.

“Jerry was talking to you about the matter, I suppose,” said her aunt, manifesting some interest in the matter.

“Yes, he does not seem to like Theophilus very well, and tells a rather hard story on him,” was the reply.

“How does he say the trouble originated?”

“He says that Theophilus struck his father with a piece of timber, so Samuel had told him.”

“Well, that may be, but I would rather have further proof than the statement of either Samuel or Jerry,” was her aunt’s reply.

“Do you think they are untruthful?”

“I have always understood that Jerry was not friendly to Theophilus. I knew his father before him, and he was not the most reliable person, and as to Samuel, your father does not place any confidence in his statements.”

“Mr. Halter is a respectable person, isn’t he, auntie?”

“Yes, I believe he is tolerated in good society, but I hope he will never be anything nearer to me than an acquaintance,” said Aunt Rose, with some little feeling, and Nellie laughed as she thought of the possibilities which she guessed had flitted through her aunt’s mind.

“I don’t think you should lose any sleep over the prospect of his ever becoming nearer to you, unless some distant relative of ours should marry the Widow McSquint, his god-mother,” said Nellie, her face radiant with smiles.

“That is certainly as remote a thing as you could think of, and I hope it expresses your feelings,” said her aunt, somewhat relieved.

“It most assuredly does, but I cannot conceive how you could be thinking of him in that way.”

“I am a pretty good judge of people, and I feel certain that he is much attached to you, and when your good angel mother died, I promised her that I would take her place and watch over you with a tender care; and of course it is my duty to give you such advice as your mother would if she were here.”

“I thank you, Aunt Rose, but I know you will believe me when I tell you that if he entertains any feeling for me beyond a casual acquaintance it is not my fault, for I have only treated him civilly and respectfully on account of the training given me by you and my father, to be respectful and kind to every one.”

“I do not doubt your word, but my responsibility is such that I could not help admonishing you with regard to a fact that has doubtless escaped your notice. And now

you know my feelings, and you have the benefit of my suggestions in the matter."

"I do not quite understand you; do you mean that I should cut his acquaintance entirely?"

"No, I do not mean that, but give him to understand that you are social with him merely as you are to all your acquaintances."

"All right, auntie, I will follow your advice with pleasure," and so saying, she sealed the bargain as usual with a kiss.

It is true that Nellie's mother had died, and on her death-bed had secured the promise of her sister-in-law, Rose Clayborn, that she would make her home with her brother Jonathan and do a mother's part by her darling children, especially by Nellie. She had fulfilled this promise faithfully to the present hour as a good Christian woman, and now that her charge was blooming into womanhood, and possessed rare beauty and intelligence, she was more than ever interested in her welfare. She herself had never married because in her girlhood she had loved with all her ardent nature a young man who died two weeks before the marriage ceremony would have bound her to him, not only in this world but in the world beyond. She belonged to that class of persons who thought that when pure love, such as should make man and wife one in the sight of God had been bestowed on another, and that other in the grave, that her duty both to the dead and the living required that she should pass her life in a kind of widowhood. It was, therefore, in accord with her religious feelings that she should take charge of, and assist in rearing and educating, her

brother's two children. So it was that while Joe and Nellie had no real mother, their good old aunt had filled that office so well, and had treated them with such tender care, that they could not strictly be called motherless.

Their home had been one of continued brightness, where love and kindness ruled. Jonathan Clayborn and his sister had adopted as the rule of home government the motto

“Remember it is better far
To rule by love than fear.”

Nellie's life up to this time had been one continued pleasant dream, with every comfort that a good parent and a lovely home could furnish. She had passed the time like the happy bird

“That hops from branch to branch of the ever green
trees,
Singing sweetly its merry music, on the gentle summer breeze.”

CHAPTER VIII.

REUBEN and Surrilda Pepper had enjoyed each other's companionship for a number of years, and two small Peppers, of either sex, were the result of their union. Reuben was an easy-going individual who wore away most of his time in whittling sticks and discussing abstract questions of philosophy. He was what might be called a contented man, except when his wife, by the use of a glib tongue, induced him to do a little manual labor. Surrilda was a fretting little soul possessed of more energy than beauty. She was a sister of Charity McSquint, who lived in the neighborhood of Squire Clayborn, and who had performed the office of godmother to Jerry Hal-

ter since that hopeful youth was four years old. Mrs. Pepper and Mrs. McSquint, being the only heirs of their deceased father, inherited the estate, and brought with them from their former home in North Carolina each about two thousand dollars in cash.

Mrs. Pepper and her devoted husband had settled more than a dozen miles west of Mrs. McSquint. They did not live so far apart but that they could occasionally visit.

Surrilda Pepper had a great love for wealth, and the sight of gold made her little eyes twinkle like the stars of evening. Of her earthly possessions some six hundred dollars were in cash, which she kept so snugly hid away that even Reuben knew not of its whereabouts.

It was mostly in gold, and she manifested a great fondness for exhibiting it to a very few, among whom was her sister Charity.

It was on Saturday afternoon in June, when Jerry Halter was induced to accompany Mrs. McSquint over to see her sister. They must stay all night and return the next afternoon. It was a pleasant visit for the Widow McSquint, whose husband, Hiram, had died but a few years before, leaving her childless and forlorn. She was consequently very fond of children. On her arrival she kissed and cried over the little Peppers in a manner eminently satisfactory to Surrilda, who had hurriedly prepared them for the ordeal by wiping their noses with her apron.

The two sisters wept upon each other's necks the usual time allotted for such matters, when the family greeting was wound up by Mrs. McSquint clasping Reuben to her bosom in a lingering embrace till Jerry led her to a chair

near by. It was the first occurrence of that kind that Reuben had ever experienced in his life, and he wondered not that Hiram McSquint had passed peacefully away to rest.

Charity had not lost the use of her tongue any more than her sister, and it was late that night when they retired to rest. She told Surrilda all about the signs, and the best time to plant garden "truck." She knew the best thing for a burn, a cut, or stone-bruise, a luxury enjoyed by little Bob Pepper to his heart's content. She knew the best remedies for whooping-cough, could cure hives and mumps in no time, and almost bring the measles out on a poplar log. She had been present at the birth of most of the children of the surrounding country, and it was through her individual skill that Hiram's life had been preserved long after the foreordained time for his departure had arrived.

Surrilda also enlightened her sister as to her neighbor's geese, cattle, horses, and children. All the peculiar qualities of her neighbors were gone over in detail, finally winding up with the hard time she had endured in getting Reuben interested in laying up treasures on earth. Mr. Pepper and Jerry, in the meantime, were seated out of doors snuffing the evening breeze and discussing the movements of the planets. The moon had been dissected by the head of the family, its size, shape, habits, and conduct criticised in Mr. Pepper's usual manner. He next plunged into nature's storehouse, invoiced the stock, and scattered causes and effects around promiscuously till Jerry fell into a sound sleep. This last incident terminated the evening's entertainment.

It was late in the afternoon of the next day, when Mrs. Pepper astonished her guests by exhibiting to them her wealth of gold which she had snugly tied up in her "ridicule," as she called it, which was a bag with strings attached, sufficiently long to go over the shoulders, and the mouth of which was closed by a "puckering string." It was a pleasant sight to Jerry who had never seen so much money before in all his life, and Mrs. McSquint put on one of her sweetest smiles as she gazed at the glittering coin. Reuben stood at a respectful distance, for he well knew by experience that it was not to be divided. Surrilda would not hide her money about the house for fear of fire or burglars. She sometimes kept it in a secluded place under the ground, but never allowed it to remain long in the same spot. After her guests had gazed on her money to their heart's content, she put the reticule under her apron, departed from the house, and returned after an absence of ten or fifteen minutes. It was time for Charity to go home, and by the time her sister had returned from re-hiding her treasure, Mr. Pepper and Jerry had the horses ready, and the two sisters parted, after several times telling each other to "Be sure and come soon and often."

The visit of Mrs. McSquint to her sister occurred a few days preceding the one on which Theophilus Wallop left his home. It was with Mr. Pepper that he spent his first night after leaving the Clayborns. He arrived late in the evening, tired and hungry from his long walk. Mrs. Pepper was somewhat averse to entertaining strangers, but as Theophilus lived in the Clayborn neighborhood, as he said, and told

her some things her sister had detailed, she concluded to let him stay all night. She prepared a cold supper for him, of which he partook with considerable relish.

Reuben was always delighted to have company, and at once set about entertaining his new guest by a minute description of the interior of the earth. He took no stock in the "new-fangled idea" that the earth revolved once a day and landed his house in its proper place every morning. It was too flat to flop over like a table every twenty-four hours without smashing up things generally. He believed in the north and south poles of the earth, but thought there were east and west poles as well, on which the whole fabric rested, and that all these poles, and perhaps more, rested on eternity. And as for the motion of the earth around the sun once a year, why, he had the Scriptures to prove the falsity of that sort of nonsense. For why did Joshua command the sun to stand still, if it didn't move? With this final argument he would cast his eyes toward the ceiling, and branch off into a description of the groove through which the sun passed in making its circle around the earth.

Theophilus, after finishing his meal, took a seat against the building and remained a silent and curious listener until overcome by his weariness, and the monotony of the scientific lecture of Reuben, and, like Jerry, he fell asleep. He was not, as may be imagined, in a talkative mood, and his peculiar reticence created a little uneasiness on the part of Mrs. Pepper, who thought he did not exactly look right out of his eyes. He was shown into an adjoining room where he retired for the night. Mrs. Pepper did not go to sleep that night as

early as usual, and it was long after Reuben was making the air musical with his heavy snoring, starting with a gurgle and winding up with an abrupt explosion from his over-worked mouth, that the little woman dropped into the arms of Morpheus. She had a frightful dream. She saw, in her slumber, a robber with a great knife chasing Reuben through the fields, and then a great number of men and officers in hot pursuit of the thief where he was finally caught behind her ash-hopper. She awoke in great fright and realized it was but a dream, but it had made her nervous. Again she tossed from side to side, and once made an effort to arouse her husband, but in vain.

Now wide awake, she heard a rustling noise in the stranger's room, like some one moving about, but it soon ceased and the nervous little woman dropped into an easy sleep which lasted till late in the morning. She finally awoke, as also did Reuben, and both got up for the day. When the morning's meal was ready, she directed her husband to arouse the stranger, not thinking that he had been gone more than two hours. When the fact was made known to her by Reuben that the stranger had left, she felt much relieved, for there was something in his manner which had caused her unrest, and she mentally resolved hereafter not to entertain such people.

She was very busy that morning, for Reuben was getting to work late; the children were to dress; besides, it was ironing day, and she had to go a half mile to borrow an iron from a neighbor. With all this work and dinner to get, it was not till in the afternoon, when she sat down to put an additional patch on little Bob's trousers, that her dream of the previous

night came back to her and caused her to shudder. She thought about her hidden treasure and the sudden departure of the stranger, and the more she meditated the more restless she became, till at last she threw the garment aside and hurried down to the spring house, in the corner of which, beneath two large stones, she had last placed the money. Her eye instantly caught the fact that the top stone had been somewhat misplaced; a great fear seized her, but she quickly removed it entirely, only to learn definitely that the reticule and money were gone. Poor woman! She indulged in an agonizing shriek, turned deathly pale, trembled from head to foot, and had she not been a woman of more than ordinary nerve, would have fainted. A few feet away she plainly saw in the soft mud a well-defined shoe-print, apparently that of a man of more than ordinary size. The mysterious conduct of the stranger, as well as her dream, was solved. But what was to be done? It was before the system of telegraphing and detectives could be called into requisition for the capture of thieves, and escape for them was easy.

Surrilda hurried with all possible speed to the field where Reuben was supposed to be at work, but instead of that he was hunkered up against a mulberry tree where he was trying to steal a nap in spite of the efforts to prevent him made by a meddlesome fly which persisted in tickling his nose. "Reuben, R-e-u-ben! We are ruined!" she screamed, as she fell down in the shade near him.

"What's the matter, Surrilda, what hurts you?" said he, thinking she was suffering an attack of cramp cholic.

"Oh! That villain! That villain Wallop

has stole my money!" she shrieked, as she stood erect with her hands clasped in front.

"A great misfortune, indeed, if true," said Reuben, as he slowly and with the greatest composure made an effort to rise.

"Don't I know he got it? My dream! My dream! Why didn't I think of it sooner? Oh, I heard him get up in the night," she sobbed afresh, and started for the house in great haste.

"Are you certain the money is gone?" said he, calling after her.

"You dunce!" exclaimed his wife. "Don't I know that I left the money in the spring house?" and Mr. Pepper, now fully awakened to the subject, started for the house in a faster gait than he had been known to do for years.

They soon arrived at the locality where the money had been stolen and Reuben measured the foot-print with great precision, when it was determined to arouse the neighbors, and, if possible, capture the thief. Little Bob was sent in one direction, Surrilda in another, while Reuben remained to watch that the track was not rubbed out. In an hour or so several neighbors were on the ground ready to render any possible assistance; and three men on horseback took a westerly course some little time before sundown for the purpose of overtaking Theophilus Wallop and bringing him to justice.

CHAPTER IX.

THE commission of a great crime in a neighborhood, like the theft of Mrs. Pepper's money, always creates great excitement, and it is soon known far and wide. Usually the perpetrator

is unknown, but in this case every known fact and circumstance pointed directly to the absconding young Wallop. No one else had opportunity to do the deed. Public opinion at once turned to him as the thief, and though the men who went west in pursuit returned the next day with no tidings of him, the search was not given up. The story of the crime spread with great rapidity; new and convincing evidence was given, consisting of the mysterious disappearance of the young man, and some old shoes of his being found, which made a print about the size of that left in the mud at the place of the crime.

An indictment, signed "a true bill," was presented against him by the county grand jury for feloniously stealing and carrying away six hundred dollars, lawful money of the realm, then and there the property of Surrilda Pepper.

Anthony Wallop heard the story of his son's crime with great sorrow, while the neighbors manifested sincere sympathy for the afflicted mother. The charge that her son was a thief had prostrated her completely. There were many persons, as usual in such cases, who were not surprised. Some had always thought the young man would turn out badly, while other knowing ones could point to incidents in the young man's childhood which had convinced them that some day he would find himself within the prison walls. Samuel felt very keenly the disgrace which had befallen the family, and insisted on his brother's disinheritance at the earliest possible moment.

The idea that a felon should partake of his father's estate at any time was entirely too much to be entertained in his mind for a moment. The father, too, was persuaded that his

youngest son had forfeited all claims to further recognition from him, and determined to make a will and cut Theophilus off from any part in his estate. This, in a measure at least, would save the family from the odium of crime. The will was written, signed, and sealed in the presence of Mrs. Wallop, with Samuel and Jerry Halter as witnesses thereto.

Thus was the finishing touch of ignominy placed on the reputation of a young man who, a fortnight before, stood high among his acquaintances. Mr. Clayborn and Joe listened to the story of the crime and downfall with feelings of pain, but neither disputed the guilt of their former acquaintance.

Nellie was sad and heartbroken, and she knew not why. Theophilus was nothing to her except that she had promised to be his friend. Did he mean that she was to take the part of a criminal, when he exacted the promise? Was he contemplating the awful crime when he told her that she would hear the reason of his departure after he had gone? Why did he desire the picture of her if he had started on the highway of crime? She analyzed all the acts of his life known to her, but nothing threw any light or suspicion on his conduct more than on other young men of his age. Temptation may have been too strong for the inexperience of youth, ruining a life in an hour. All these thoughts and more rushed through her mind, but the evidence of his guilt was so strong and his conduct so strange, that there seemed no reasonable way of reaching a satisfactory conclusion. It was no harm to withhold judgment, however, until further investigation, and she determined to wait in silence, and hoped it might not be true.

It continued to be the theme of conversation and comment, and at the next regular meeting the itinerant minister took for his text: "Thou shalt not steal." This sermon had been fully advertised, and the people came from a great distance to hear it. Mr. and Mrs. Pepper came to Mrs. McSquint's on Saturday evening in order to be present during its delivery. The services were held in a grove near the Clayborn schoolhouse where the congregation early assembled with Surrilda Pepper as the center of attraction. She wore her deep blue calico dress, the same she wore when she stood in the presence of the squire and promised to love and obey, as her lawful and wedded husband, Reuben Pepper. A sun-bonnet and gingham apron completed her toilet. She took her seat near the platform. Mrs. McSquint and Surrilda's smallest child occupied a seat near her.

The minister, who had a long, thin, sad face, high standing collar, a black luster coat, and black, curly hair reaching down to his shoulders, opened the services by reading from the same little red hymn-book (which Theophilus had inspected on a former occasion) the old and familiar hymn, the first two lines of which are as follows:

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me."

This song was properly lined and sung, except that Mrs. McSquint, who thought it her Christian duty to lead, pitched her voice several tones higher than the others, landing on a pinnacle above them, making quite a discord. Mr. Wallop and his good lady were not present, but Samuel, in company with Jerry Halter,

supplied their absence. Mr. Clayborn and family of course were present as quiet and respectful listeners.

It was indeed a solemn occasion, as much so, perhaps, as it would have been if young Wallop had died and was being buried. After the usual formal ceremonies, the pious man again arose, and in a tomb-like voice, entered upon his discourse.

“There are,” said he, “absent faces from this dying congregation on whom a great sorrow has fallen. Our dear brother Wallop, the father of the depraved and lawless youth who has brought the blush of shame to all his kindred, is not with us, because of a consciousness of his own sin in refraining to give his wayward son that training and discipline so necessary in rearing a family. Oh, my beloved friends, who have the care and custody of growing children, do not ‘spare the rod’ until it is everlastingly too late. There is so much depravity and innate meanness in the youth, that parental blows should fall thick and fast until every vestige of crime disappears through the pores of the skin.” He then took up the late sensation in all its horrible details, and held young Wallop up as a most terrible example for one so young. He grew red in the face and truly eloquent when he spoke of Mrs. Pepper’s great misfortune. “In a moment,” said he, “the savings of years of toil and economy were taken from her and her little ones.” This was too much for the sorrowing woman, who had already manifested her feelings by patting her foot and moving backwards and forwards. She burst into a flood of tears, which set Mrs. McSquint to crying, and the

small Peppers, not knowing what else to do, followed suit and terminated the sermon just before it received its finishing touches. The last song, commencing "There will be no sorrow there," acted like Godfrey's cordial on the stricken family and the congregation was dismissed. The preacher received many congratulations for his ability in presenting his subject. He had consigned, in fitting language, poor Theophilus to a lake of burning fire, and the people dispersed to their homes.

During the sermon, Samuel Wallop was an attentive listener, and scarcely took his eyes off the good man's face while it lasted. He had been described as a model youth; and highly complimented for his noble conduct in an effort to reform his brother, and several times poked Halter in the ribs, when his name was mentioned. Jerry was also an earnest listener, except to occasionally glance in the direction of Nellie, who failed to return his friendly gaze. She caught each word, and weighed them as they fell upon her ears, but was unable to find in them any solution of the crime, more than she already knew. That afternoon Halter rode over from his home to Mr. Clayborn's, where he was cordially received by all the family, and another whom he was not looking for in particular. This individual was no less a personage than Dick Spooner, who had not allowed the boys and girls of the neighborhood to grow up to be young men and women without his keeping in line. Dick was a handsome boy of seventeen, and was making a desperate effort to sprout a mustache, which to this date was but a partial success. He was a clever fellow, full of fun, good-na-

tured, and consequently well liked by every one. His good qualities had made him considerable of a rival among the boys, and Halter was evidently a little displeased to meet him on that day. Dick had seen Jerry at the meeting and heard him say that he was going over to Clayborn's that afternoon, and mischievously conceived the notion that it would be a good idea to "cut him out." Without a word to any one, he ate his dinner after services, and taking the nearest course through the fields, proceeded to the Clayborn residence. He soon found an opportunity and engaged Nellie to take a walk with him. They were just in the act of starting when they saw Jerry coming through the gate. Nellie laid aside her hat until she excused herself to "beau No. two," and turned him over to the keeping of Joe.

Jerry, who knew nothing of her arrangement with Dick, and would not have approved of it if he had, in a subdued tone asked her "if his company would be acceptable during the afternoon," to which she modestly responded "that he would have to excuse her, as she had an engagement with Mr. Spooner, and that he must call some other time." Halter changed color in a moment, and felt as if he had "gotten the mitten," and somewhat sullenly said "that under the circumstances he would have to excuse her." There were two points in her answer that cut him to the quick. One was that her company was engaged to Dick, the other that she had called him "Mr. Spooner."

While this subdued conversation was going on, Dick was but a few feet away, and though he could not hear what they said, he saw the flush in Jerry's face, and guessing the cause,

was almost choking with laughter at the discomfiture of his rival. Jerry moved slowly away to the porch where Joe was reading. He was deeply disappointed, and gave Dick a look anything but friendly, which was met by a triumphant smile.

To add to Halter's mortification, Dick and Nellie strolled leisurely down the path, away from the house in plain view of both Joe and Jerry. As they walked along Dick assumed a dignified attitude, placing his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, while his hat rested on his well-shaped head at an angle of forty-five degrees. He was full of merry fun, for well he knew that every step and movement of his caused a feeling of jealous wrath on the part of Jerry Halter.

Dick's greatest fault was his delight in playing innocent jokes and teasing persons of a sensitive disposition. This peculiar trait is born in some people, and he was possessed with a full share of it. When a mere lad he would go any distance to play "ghost" on persons who lived in dread of such an imaginary terror. Not only this, but he would sometimes go even miles to do some innocent trick to provoke a laugh. He would tie a stick or tin can to a dog's tail just to see it run or hear it yelp. At one time there lived near him an old bachelor who had a peculiar fondness for raising chickens, but he had much trouble in keeping the raccoons, opossums, and night hawks from destroying them before he could get them to market. Night after night this old man would be disturbed from his rest by the pesky "varmints." Dick saw a capital place for fun here and often played "varmint" on the old man. He would go at

night, snatch an old hen off the roost, the squalls of which would bring the proprietor barefooted, and in his night clothes, to the scene; a chase would follow, until Dick would choke the hen to silence and hide beneath the growing corn. The poor old man would go back to bed, and not more than get to sleep again, when it would be repeated, except that briars and thistles would be strewn along the path leading from the old man's domicile to his hen-roost. On these, of a dark night, he would step with his naked feet, and indulge in language unbecoming a member of the church.

These, with other boyish freaks, constituted Dick's weakness, which he could not help. He was a model country boy. He was not narrow with his affection, not caring for any girl in particular, but let his big heart spread over the surrounding country and took them all in a group. He was happy this afternoon, first because he had "cut Jerry out," and then because it was pleasant to enjoy the society of so charming a girl as Nellie.

"I am sorry," he said, after getting some distance away, "to cheat Jerry this way."

"Oh, he don't care about me," she said evasively.

"Well, if he always looked as crimson in the face, and talked as polite, as when he left you, he would be real handsome, don't you think?" said Dick, laughing.

"I did not notice him blush," she said, looking at a face so full of merriment that she, too, was forced to join in it.

"He thought his 'cake was dough,' I guess," said Dick, gleefully.

"Oh, I did not wish to offend him, and told him to come some other time," said Nellie.

“ Watch him go,” he said, and they saw him going toward the road at a full gallop.

Jerry was smarting under the joke, and determined to leave, never to return. On reaching the gate, he attempted to open it without dismounting, but his untamed animal was unused to such a proceeding, and refused to go near enough to allow it. This further annoyed Halter, and he commenced to vigorously jerk the animal on its tender mouth by the bridle reins until it reared almost erect on its hind feet, finally breaking the girth of the saddle, and landing the rider on the ground. This frightened the horse and it started backward dragging its dismounted rider. He held on to the reins until it became too dangerous, when he let loose entirely, and the horse struck out at a two-forty gait across the woods pasture, while the owner suffered the loss of two or three buttons, one suspender broken, a rent in the knee of his trousers, and a small patch of cuticle from his elbow.

Nellie was somewhat frightened, but Dick laughed worse than a boy at school, for it was joke number two on his competitor, in one day. Joe, who had seen the occurrence from the house, caught the horse, took it back to Jerry, repaired the girth, assisted the rider to his place in the saddle, who then made his way back to Mrs. McSquint's. She not only sewed on his missing buttons and fixed the torn trousers, but put a flaxseed poultice on his elbow, the best remedy, she declared, ever applied to “ lacerated ” skin.

“ I am afraid you are a bad boy, Dick, to laugh at one's misfortune,” said Nellie, after Jerry was safely on his horse.

“Well, I can’t help it, I believe I would have laughed if he had been killed, for then he would not have been in my way when I wanted to see you,” said he in a playful way.

“He did not seem to be much in your way this afternoon,” she said.

“No, but I am looking out for the future,” he said, as he placed his index finger on his lip, where there was a faint resemblance to a light mustache.

“Don’t let that worry you,” she said, referring to the tender growth on his upper lip, “for it will be some years before it will be ripe enough to cut.” They both laughed at Dick’s expense, for they had been raised together, and she was acquainted with his good nature, and felt free to twit him without fear of offense. They continued to talk as they moved about in the forest, gathering flowers, until they came to a fallen tree on which they sat down to rest.

Nellie was not quite herself this evening, and it had required all the talking ability Dick possessed to keep her in a genial mood. She would sometimes, in spite of his efforts, fasten her eyes on a distant object and be slow to answer his many and odd questions, until he began to suspicion that perhaps she was sorry that she was not with Jerry instead of himself. While thus thinking, he caught sight of some letters which had been cut on a beech tree some years ago, and, without a word, went closer to ascertain what they were. They were “T. W.” and “N. C.”

“Come this way, Nellie,” and pointing to the letters “N. C.,” he exclaimed: “Those

are the initials of your name, and these are for—”

“Theophilus Wallop,” she said, interrupting him.

“Poor fellow,” said Dick, “I can’t help but feel sorry for him,” and there was an unusual seriousness about his face which showed Nellie that he actually meant what he said.

At this remark she felt a queer sensation creep over her, for it was the only word of sympathy she had heard uttered in his behalf since the terrible crime was committed. She hid her emotions and responded: “Dick, you don’t sympathize with a thief, do you?”

“I sympathize with Theophilus Wallop, for he was my best friend,” said he, without answering her in the abstract.

“But he did a great wrong and committed a serious crime, if what we learn is true,” said Nellie, with her eyes firmly fixed on his own.

“Certainly, I know that, but we had so much fun together, and he was so kind to me, that I can’t help but pity him,” said Dick, reflectively.

“He had a good home and kind parents with whom he could have lived an honest life,” she said, inquiringly.

“Yes, he ought to have been honest, but I would not have lived with his father a month, for his farm,” said Dick, with emphasis.

“Why?”

“Well, I know why.”

“Theophilus mistreated his father, I heard.”

“Put the shoe on the other foot and it will fit,” said Dick.

“I don’t understand you,” she said.

“It’s none of my business, but I don’t wonder that he left home.”

! “He ought not to have abused his father,” said Nellie.

“You mean that his father ought not to have abused him.”

“No, I mean he should not have struck his father and then leave home.”

“Who ever said he did such a thing?”

“I think Samuel, his brother, told it.”

“To whom did he tell it?”

“To Jerry Halter, I believe.”

“And Jerry told you, of course.”

“I did not say that, Dick.”

“No, but I guessed as much. Well,” continued he, “I much prefer to take the statement of Mrs. Wallop as to how the matter occurred.”

“Has she told you about it?”

“She has.”

“And what did she tell you, please?”

“Will you keep it a secret, if I tell you?”

“Certainly, if you desire it.”

“She did not tell me every word that was said, but gave me an account of the trouble. ‘Theophilus’ said she, ‘struck Samuel in the face, a serious blow, for which Mr. Wallop used his switch on him severely, making a wound in his cheek, without any resistance on the part of Theophilus.’”

“Did she tell you what was the immediate cause of their difference?”

“She did not, for she was much distressed, and cried so pitifully when Theophilus’s name was mentioned, that I had to leave to keep from shedding a few tears myself, and you know that I am too big to cry.”

“Poor woman,” said Nellie, as her eyes filled with tears.

Dick was too good hearted not to be moved by the sympathetic face before him. There was a long silence, during which both were busy thinking.

“Nellie,” said Dick, “let’s you and I make a bargain and turn detectives, and see what we can find out about this whole trouble.”

Nellie was forced to laugh at the odd proposition, and, blushing, at first regarded it as ridiculous, for she had always been taught by her good aunt not to meddle in other people’s affairs; besides, what could a helpless girl like herself do in such matters? Dick, seeing from her countenance that she did not regard the matter favorably, said: “You can’t help but feel sorry for poor Mrs. Wallop, and Theophilus and I have been such good friends that I would just like to know why he got into all this trouble. I will do the prying around and will report to you occasionally what I find out.

Dick saw where he might accomplish two purposes: he might be able to do his absent friend some good, and it would be a first-class opportunity of making himself “solid” with Nellie and keep the other young men at a distance, and especially Jerry Halter.

Nellie had already detected a falsehood in the story of Theophilus’s abuse of his father, and as her part was that of a mere listener she consented to give the plan a trial. It was agreed that Dick should learn all he could during the coming week, and report the next Sunday afternoon.

This suited him exactly, for he expected

Jerry would be well by that time and over his "mad spell," and he knew him well enough to feel assured that he would try to get even with him for that day's contest.

Nellie glanced once more at the letters on the tree, and they both returned to the house just as the sun was sinking in the west.

Dick struck out for home, which was with a Mr. Flint at the time, for Dick had no mother or father living, both having died when he was small, leaving him an orphan among the good people of the neighborhood. His only relatives, an uncle and aunt on his father's side, lived in Iowa. He had been kindly treated, and was a general favorite, first one assisting him and then another until he was large enough to earn his own living, which he now did as a hired hand.

He was highly elated with his new idea, and determined to go to work at once. Nellie resumed her usual domestic duties, but passed the following week in a somewhat disturbed condition of mind.

CHAPTER X.

"SAM, you are the slyest fox in these dig-gins," said Jerry Halter, as the two bosom friends sat beneath a walnut tree, which stood near the bend of the road in the woods some distance from Mr. Wallop's barn.

"I don't often get beat when I put this piece of machinery to work," said Samuel Wallop, who felt flattered by the remark, placing his finger on his forehead.

"How did you get the old man's consent to make the will, anyway?"

“O that was easy. I saw Thornbush, the minister, and told him all about Theophilus’s beating father, his running off from home, and of his stealing Mrs. Pepper’s money. I told him the disgrace was killing father, and that I did not believe I could live long under it myself. We talked a long time. He wanted me to regard it as one of those afflictions which befall the Christian in his journey to the better world. I asked him if something could not be done to relieve us from the disgrace before we left this mundane sphere, for instance, could father not make a will and cut off Theophilus on account of his crime.

“‘O certainly, it is his duty to do so at once,’ was his answer.

“‘Will you talk with him on the subject,’ I asked.

“‘I will see him tomorrow,’ said he.

“‘Do, Brother Thornbush, if you please,’ said I, ‘for I do not feel like I could meet the brethren of the church with this great load on me.’

“‘Be assured, Brother Wallop, that I will spare no pains in setting you and your distressed parents right with the world if I can,’ was his reply.

“‘You will not mention my visit to any one, I hope,’ said I.

“‘These communications, my brother, are sacred and privileged, and should I reveal them to the world I would be unfit to teach among the children of men,’ he replied. I handed him a little something to help him through the world and went back home. I had spoken to the old chap about the matter myself, but mother kept flying up about it, and I could

not make a go of it, but I knew Brother Thornbush had a great influence over him, and I determined to put him to work, if possible. Sure enough, next day he came over and had a long talk with the folks, and I listened and heard all I could from outside of the house. He read a great deal of Scripture: 'If thy right hand offend thee cut it off and throw it away,' etc., and some more I couldn't understand. Finally the old man gave up and I went after you."

"Ah, that was the way, was it? I thought the 'old man' tumbled tolerably quick," said Halter, as he looked down the road.

"Say, Jerry, you want to keep mum about our matters, and especially so about Clayborn's, for I did not like the way that gal looked at me at meeting last Sunday."

"Well, I know how to be silent, and as for Nell Clayborn, if she does not treat me better than she did last Sunday afternoon, I will not speak to her in the future."

"Got sacked, I suppose."

"Not exactly that, but that little upstart of a boy, Dick Spooner, got in ahead of me," said Halter.

Samuel gave a low, characteristic chuckle, but suddenly stopped short as he thought he heard a noise in the underbrush near by. Both listened for some time in breathless silence, but nothing save the voices of the "whip-poor-will" and "katy-did" could be heard.

"I'll square up with Spooner yet," continued Jerry.

"You better go slow in this here 'gal' busi-

ness, for they are dangerous creatures to fool with," said Sam, cautiously.

"Well, I am going to have my fun, besides, old Clayborn has got lots of stuff, you know."

"Yes, but the road you are taking is the furthestest around to it, it seems to me."

"That may be so, but that girl's worth having, and I will get her yet, if I have to wring Spooner's neck to accomplish it."

Again both stopped to listen, but the same silence prevailed as before. After a short interval Samuel, without a word, took his comrade by the arm and together they went to the house and were soon in the same bed, where what was said, if anything, was heard only by themselves.

Dick Spooner had gone over that day, at an hour when he knew Anthony and his son Samuel would be in the field at work, for the purpose of borrowing, as he said, a "single-tree," for Mr. Flint's farm joined Mr. Wallop's on the east. Dick was ploughing corn alone in the field. He was much worried for an excuse to visit Mrs. Wallop, for it was she whom he wanted to see. He knew that very likely his visit would be known by both Mr. Wallop and Flint, and he must have a plausible excuse for his absence. He tried hard to run his plow deep in the ground under a root and break the single-tree which was manifesting signs of age, but it persisted in doing duty as of old. Not to be outdone, he deliberately unhitched the horse, took it loose from the plough, and fetching it a blow near the middle across a stump, it dropped in two pieces on the ground, much to his satisfaction.

When Dick arrived that morning at Wallop's

house he found no one at home, as he expected, but Mrs. Wallop, who had just come in from the garden with a pan full of new potatoes which she was preparing for dinner. He told her his business, and the good woman went to the barn and returned with the article in a very short time.

Dick looked around curiously, but saw nothing which attracted his attention except the switch over the door. He did not exactly know how to proceed to get the information he wanted, but remembering that harvest was at hand, he asked Mrs. Wallop on her return "who was going to help Mr. Wallop cut his wheat?"

"Jerry Halter," she said, "was all they had gotten yet."

"When will they commence work?" inquired Dick.

"This afternoon," she said.

"Jerry will go home of a night, I suppose, and come back each morning," said Dick, mechanically.

"No, he will stay here; Mrs. McSquint has gone to her sister's."

He took his leave without further questions, and was feeling much pleased with his success, for he had determined to shadow Jerry and Samuel at the first opportunity. The hours of the remainder of the day dragged slowly to him, for he was in a fever, almost, for darkness to come.

Mr. Flint and family retired early, as usual at this season of the year, and just after dark, Dick quietly left his room, and made his way cautiously to within a hundred yards or so of Mr. Wallop's residence. He moved along

carefully to avoid observation. Everything was still, and he was about to conclude that they were all asleep, but just then he heard occasional sounds down the road, when he instantly took off his shoes and moved in that direction until he saw the figures of Samuel and Jerry near the bend of the road. He kept as near them as he safely could, until they sat down beneath the tree, when he stole up quietly to within twenty feet of the pair, where he lay flat on the ground, still as a mouse, catching every word that was said. He listened to Samuel giving the details of the manner in which he had procured the making of the will with interest. His inexperience as a detective and his peculiar make-up were responsible for two grave blunders which occurred, and but for which he might have gained valuable information.

When he heard Halter say that "Dick Spooner had gotten ahead of him with Nellie," he was seized with a fit of laughter, which he tried hard to suppress, but did not entirely succeed, and made enough noise to attract Samuel's attention. Again, when he heard that his own neck was to be wrung like a chicken's, he fairly shook the ground around him.

It was the noise he made the second time which frightened the two companions away. He followed after them, but was unable to hear another word. He went back to his home, and remained awake a long while, thinking of what he had heard. He had heard enough to lead him to suspect that these two fellows were in some deep scheme together.

Samuel's statement as to how he worked the Rev. Mr. Thornbush, and secured his assistance in procuring the execution of the will,

had made a decided impression on his mind ; and the boastful manner in which he related the circumstances to his chum convinced him that Sam Wallop was capable of any amount of hypocrisy and treachery.

As to Jerry, he could not think of him without feeling very much tickled and amused. He made up his mind at once to give that worthy young man all the rope he wanted. He upbraided himself for his lack of caution, and promised himself to do better in the future.

Each night during the remainder of the week, Dick hung around Mr. Wallop's residence, but was unable to hear a word between the two young men. He was not disheartened or weary, for he was able to be in his own bed by half past ten, every night. On Friday night, just as he was about to return and was in the act of leaving his hiding-place, he saw a flickering light through the west door, which was immediately shut off, and he knew the door had opened. He watched for a few moments, when he saw someone coming directly toward him, as he was near the road. He quickly lay down in the tall weeds, when Jerry, alone, walked past and within a few feet of him, down the road in the direction of the walnut tree.

Dick followed after him, stealthily, but he did not stop at the tree but continued down a little ravine into a thick woods, which made it difficult to keep in sight of him. He followed as best he could, stopping now and then to listen, when finally Halter stopped at the trunk of a large oak tree which had fallen, leaving quite a large hole in the earth.

What he was doing, or did, Dick could not

tell. He remained but a little while and returned, followed as before, until he had entered the door from whence he came. He knew it was too dark to go back to the spot that night with any hope of learning the object of Halter's visit, and determined to return in daylight. Accordingly, on Saturday morning he obtained leave to go squirrel hunting, a common custom at that time, for the woods contained plenty of game. He took the precaution to reconnoitre in the fields where Mr. Wallop and his hands were at work, and found them busily engaged in finishing up the wheat harvest.

Without being noticed by any one, he wandered around to the location of the fallen tree. He was unable, at first, to see any sign of the earth or underbrush having been disturbed; but on brushing away the dry leaves, he saw two well-defined foot-prints made in the red clay near the root of the tree. He took an accurate measurement of each, and at once came to the conclusion that one of these tracks had been made by Halter, and the other by Samuel, as one was considerably larger than the other.

He commenced a vigilant search among the brush and crevices in the timber thereabout. He hunted a long while without success, and was just giving up in despair, when he concluded to rake away the dry leaves from beneath the fallen oak; and away up the log, where a large limb had grown out, he reached his hand, when instantly he heard a hissing sound, and just as he drew back his hand, a huge rattlesnake shot forth its muddy head, just touching him but not breaking the skin. Poor Dick, he bounded into the air, while his blood seemed to freeze in his veins, and fetched

a yell that would have done credit to a "Commanchie" Indian.

It was some time before he got sufficiently composed to get a club near by and dispatch the reptile, which he finally did. He took his rifle on his shoulder, and without further search returned to Mr. Flint's.

Early in the afternoon of the next day, dressed in his best clothes, he appeared at Clayborn's; but to his utter astonishment, as he was nearing the house, he saw, sitting on the back porch, Jerry Halter, who had reconsidered his resolution of the Sunday before, and was now enjoying himself to his heart's content with Nellie with whom he was in conversation.

Halter had always borne a fair reputation among the people of the neighborhood, on account of the fact that he was industrious and had, to all outward appearances, kindly treated his godmother, Mrs. McSquint. Jerry's mother had died when he was an infant, and his father had had the misfortune to be sent to the penitentiary for stealing bacon, but this little bit of unpleasant family history was known to but a very few, and it was not charged up to the orphan, and was kept from the general public.

He had always lived in the vicinity, where Charity, as she was usually called, had taken him to raise, and, as a matter of course, he was admitted into the best society. Nellie possessed such a pleasant nature and knew so well how to make people feel comfortable in her presence that it was no wonder she had so many suitors.

Jerry had on a new pair of trousers, a palmetto hat and with his bleached muslin shirt which had been starched in Charity's best

style, along with a neatly ironed linen coat, he presented an alarmingly respectable appearance, at least, so thought Dick, as he took his seat some distance away.

“It is a pleasant evening, Mr. Spooner,” said Nellie, as she took his hat and hurried away with it, leaving the two young men to enjoy each other’s society while she was gone to the front room. The young men had merely spoken on Dick’s arrival, and were, as might be imagined, unpleasantly situated, not knowing just what was the proper thing to say if, indeed, it was proper to say anything.

At length Dick broke the monotony of the occasion and the line of his rival’s thoughts, who was, at that moment, going over in his mind the words “Mr. Spooner” which a second time had been applied to his competitor, saying: “How’s your arm, Jerry?” referring to his injury on his former visit, and in a tone half-way between pity and contempt.

“It is in good condition, as you will probably learn,” said Jerry, reddening in the face.

“I am real glad,” said Dick, apparently not noticing the implied threat, “for I was afraid it was broken,” and he glanced at the ceiling for fear he would betray the merriment which was stealing over him.

Before any reply was made to the last remark Nellie came back, and the three occupied seats at about equal distances from each other. It is always a difficult task for a young lady to entertain two young men at the same time, and she was taxed to her utmost on this occasion.

She had already informed Jerry of her en-

gagement with Mr. Spooner for that afternoon, and he had been inwardly chiding himself for his lack of foresight in not pushing the matter in his own behalf on his former visit. He consequently felt that his presence would be, in a measure, a trespass on the rules of propriety, and, asking for his hat, he took his departure, going through the house where Nellie accompanied him to the door, where, however, he secured her promise to entertain him the following Sunday afternoon, and he went away much happier than on his former visit, but resolving in his heart that "Mr. Spooner" should yet account for his impudence.

"Well, Dick," said she, on returning, "how do you like playing detective?"

"Tip-top; killed a snake, at least," he said, laughing at his scare.

"Hope it did not bite you."

"No, but it scared me out of several years growth."

"Well, you need not mind that, for you are too large now, some folks think," she said, laughing.

"I hope I will never grow less in your estimation," he said, coquettishly.

"Don't get sentimental, Mr. Spooner, but tell me what progress you made in hunting up matters."

He gave her in detail what he had heard about the will, not forgetting what Jerry had said about her, her father's money, and himself.

She felt indignant but kept her feelings to herself. When Dick described his enterprise with Jerry and his trip to the fallen oak, she manifested great interest, and especially so

when Dick drew from his coat pocket two sticks which he had used in measuring the footprints. These two tracks, he urged, could be no others than those of Samuel and Jerry. Besides, they convinced him that these two men had visited the spot together at some time and had made an effort to cover up the evidences of it.

The facts given and conclusions drawn by him were plausible indeed, but they might be explained, she thought, but so might the inculpatory facts pointing to the guilt of Theophilus. Nellie again went over in her mind the last words she had heard him say; especially did she picture in her mind his face when he had her promise to answer his letter. He had been gone nearly three weeks, but no letter had come to her, and no one had heard of him since he was at her own home and that of Mr. Pepper.

It is wonderful how two minds will drift into the same line of thought sometimes, for Dick, after a pause, turned to Nellie and said: "It's a wonder Theophilus don't write a letter back here to someone if he is not guilty of the crime."

"That depends upon how far he has gone and whether he wants anyone to know of his whereabouts."

"Theophilus had a great many friends here, and I confess it puzzles me to understand why someone cannot tell of his whereabouts."

"It is not too late yet for him to be heard from, for he may have traveled a long distance."

"Well, well," said he, "I've gone into this business, and intend to run the matter down."

“I hope you will, Dick, for the guilty ought to be punished and the innocent freed from suspicion.”

“Say, Nellie, how does Jerry talk about me, anyway?”

“He is not your best friend, I should judge.”

“Of course not, because he thinks you and I are *too* good friends!”

“I do not know as to that, but it need not worry him,” she said, emphatically.

“When is he coming over again, if you will pardon the impertinence of the question?”

“You are inquisitive, aren’t you?”

“If I were not, I would not make a good detective,” he said, laughing.

“Well then, I will not look for you next Sunday.”

“Very well, I won’t get jealous,” and they both laughed, for while Nellie enjoyed Dick’s society and he hers, and they were the best of friends, yet they were not lovers in any sense of the word, for Dick, at least, prided himself on his ability to keep aloof from such entanglements.

It was late in the evening when he left for his home without any definite arrangements as to his return, but he promised to let her know of any new discovery he might make.

The absence of Theophilus had not been discussed by Mr. Clayborn and his family, and no theories of the crime had ever been offered, or explanation suggested, by him. He was not a man who rushed along with the tide of public opinion, unless his own reason and judgment thus directed him. He had, in his own mind, been slow to believe that one so young and apparently honest as Theophilus had al-

ways been, could suddenly plunge into the depths of crime. He had consequently said nothing on the subject, but had been a careful listener. Nellie was, on more than one occasion, on the verge of asking his opinion on the subject, but delicacy or something of the kind, she knew not what, always prevented her. She had been in the habit all her life of asking her father's advice about matters of interest to her, but now she shrank from approaching him. She confessed to herself, somehow, that she was deeply interested in a matter that involved the life and happiness of another. He came to her rescue, however, for he surmised that she and Dick had had the matter under discussion, but of course did not know what they said.

"Well, my daughter," said he, "have you and Dick settled the matter of the great crime, and who did it, satisfactorily?"

"No, indeed, father, I wish we could. Can't you help us?" she said, good-naturedly.

"It will require time, I think, to definitely settle the facts in the case."

"Do you think, father, that Theophilus did it?"

"Appearances seem to be against him, yet there are many things which throw doubt over his guilt."

"Please explain your meaning fully," she said, as she drew her chair near his.

"In the first place, men do not become criminals in a day or an hour, as a rule, but they become such by degrees, first by petty offences and then gradually harden to it."

"But there are exceptions to the rule, I guess," said Nellie.

“Yes, and if Theophilus is guilty, he belongs to that class.”

“I never thought it of him, and he certainly did not look bad,” she said.

“That is true; but what does Dick think about it?”

“He does not believe him guilty, I think,” and with this answer she hurried into the next room, for she could not answer further questions, she was afraid, without violating the confidence of Dick. Upon the whole, the matter was left in her mind with almost the same degree of uncertainty as before, and she concluded, with her father, that it would take time to settle the facts.

Yet there was not an hour, when she was awake, but that it was uppermost in her mind.

CHAPTER XI.

It was after the harvests were gathered and the new-mown hay was giving forth its delicious odor, and the green and growing corn had been “laid by,” that Charity McSquint sat out on the front porch of her dwelling. Her hair was done up on the back of her head in a knot, and securely fastened by a large, long-toothed comb, with an ornamental attachment which reached far above her head. She was not a proud woman, yet she had on a newly washed and ironed frock, with little white stars dotted over it. She had polished her shoes with the oil extract of opossum, which did not make them shine and glisten, but they presented an appearance of healthy preservation. She was knitting a sock for Jerry, for she did

not wait like some people till dead of winter, she declared, to do such work.

The needles were flying fast, for she was an expert at knitting, while her mind was equally busy, darting from theme to theme and wondering how this one and that one was getting along in the world.

She was unselfish, purely so, and would go any distance to instruct or give advice, and mix or straighten any little difference there might exist among her neighbors. She had persuaded Surrilda, that notwithstanding her great misfortune, there was much for her to live for; and now she was revolving in her mind the best plan to check the anguish and soothe the sorrow of poor Mrs. Wallop, who must be giving down beneath the great weight upon her, since her son, Theophilus, had become a highway robber, as she called him.

It seemed to her, good soul, that the neighbors were not doing all for this woman's comfort which might and ought to be done in such a serious case. While thus thinking she resolved to go that very afternoon and pay her a visit, and with this hasty conclusion she dropped her knitting, hurried through the house to the door next to the field in which Jerry was at work, and shouted: "O Jer-ry!" He not answering, she pitched her voice a few tones higher, and screamed, "Jer-re-e," which brought the young man to the house in great haste.

"I want you to catch 'old John' for me by the time dinner is ready," said she. Old John was a pacing saddle-horse, and widely known in the neighborhood as "stockin'" John, because three of his feet were white while the re-

mainder of his body was a deep red bay. This animal, with the other stock, had been turned into the new pastures just opened by the removal of the grain and grass. Jerry took down from the rack her riding bridle and proceeded to execute his order with some misgiving, for stockin' John was a characteristic horse. He was the most docile of creatures and could pace and rock like a sugar trough, making four miles an hour with the greatest ease.

Charity took great pleasure in pushing him to his greatest speed when in company, or when nearing the church. He would eat salt out of your hand and allow you to rub him even when out in the broad fields, but was very particular that you did not get hold of his mane or ears. In other words he was very fond of liberty especially so when the "pickin" was good.

On this occasion he was very partial to his new location and led Jerry many times around the field in his effort to capture him. He would allow his pursuer to almost get him in his grasp, when he would wheel suddenly around, emit a wheezing neigh, send his heels high up in the air, scamper to the other side of the pasture and commence grazing afresh. It was apparently great sport for the horse, but to Jerry, who was perspiring from his exertion in the heat of a burning sun, it was an unpleasant task indeed.

The chase was kept up until Jerry was both angry and exhausted, but "old John" was calm and serene. Mrs. McSquint took note of the long absence, and suspecting the cause, took up her sun-bonnet and hurried to Jerry's assistance. The horse was finally caught, after

cornering him with one on each side, much to the gratification of Jerry, who had begun to use language much too harsh for polite society.

The dinner was over, the horse ready; and after admonishing Jerry to be careful about fire, and to see that the hawks did not get any of the "dominicker" hen's chickens, which had just been hatched, she mounted her steed with head erect, and struck out in a pacing rock on her mission of Christian duty.

She arrived in a short time, for it was but a little over two miles distant, and hitching her horse to the fence, she made her way to the front door, where Mrs. Wallop met her with extended hand. This she grasped and held for a moment, but not satisfied, she threw both arms about her neck and occupied her accustomed amount of time in hugging and weeping, not neglecting to occasionally pound Mrs. Wallop in the back and shoulders with her trembling fist.

"Oh, how I do pity you!" she moaned, as she released her neighbor, who was not entirely overcome by the manifestation of disinterested affection, for she was acquainted with Charity's weakness in this regard, if we may call it such.

"Are you well, Charity?" said Mrs. Wallop, not heeding her very sympathetic remark.

"Yes, I am middlin' well now, but I was right bad off all last week. I had the 'flimsey' in my throat, but I made a poultice of garlic and 'cuckle burs,' and I am better again, but I am never stout any more. How is your folks—I mean Mr. Wallop, Samuel, and yourself?"

"We are all about as well as common, except

Anthony, who complains of rheumatism a good deal here of late."

"Poor old man, it is hard to be afflicted and troubled both at the same time, but I know just what will cure his rheumatiz."

"Well, I have done everything for him I know how to do," said Mrs. Wallop.

"Have you ever rubbed him with burdock and pokeberry roots bilt down?"

"Yes, we have used both, but they seem to do no good."

"Did you ever poultice him with stewed ingerns?"

"No, I never tried that."

"Did you ever rub him with red pepper? That's the very best thing in the world. When Hiram lay all winter with the 'syatticks' (and rheumatiz is nothing to syatticks) I used to rub him by the hour, plum from his 'hock' up to his clavicle blade. But, poor man, when he took the yaller janders, I knowed he had to go." And she wiped her eyes with her apron.

"Yes, we all have our troubles," said Mrs. Wallop.

"I have been so sorry for you lately that I thought I ought to come and see you, and comfort you all I could," she said, in a motherly tone.

"I am used to trouble, and I suppose we all are."

"I used to grieve very much," said Charity, "because I had no children; but since your great sorrow I have become reconciled so that I can throw my disaffection on Jerry."

"My children are very dear to me."

"You mean Samuel."

“No, I mean my children.”

“But Theophilus, I heard, had been disowned by you.”

“You have doubtless heard a great many things which are not true,” she said with some warmth.

“Oh, yes, but he has left home, and abused his father, and—”

“He did not abuse his father,” Mrs. Wallop interposed.

“Is it not true that he struck his father with a piece of timber?” said Mrs. McSquint, turning in her seat with great anxiety.

“It is not.”

“Goodness sakes alive,” she exclaimed in astonishment, and continued:

“But what about my sister’s money?”

“I know nothing about it,” she said.

“But you know Theophilus is accused of taking it.”

“Yes, I have heard so, but he is an honest boy, and I don’t believe he took the money.”

“I would be *so glad* to *know* he did not do it,” said the inquisitor.

“Maybe you will know it some day,” said Mrs. Wallop with a sigh.

“I *do hope* so, but since Hiram left me I feel that I haven’t much to live for and want to be at rest,” and she placed her right hand against her troubled face, and supported her elbow with her left. (This was a favorite attitude with Charity when she went into a state of absolute solemnity.) She remained silent for some time, but feeling that she had not done all in her power to console the distressed woman, she blew her nose on her apron and renewed her questions.

“Jerry told me that Mr. Pepper said that Samuel should have remarked to him at one time that Theophilus was bad to steal water-millions,’ when a small boy. Was that so Mrs. Wallop?”

“Not to my knowledge.”

“And did he try to take Brother Thornbush’s hymn-book, when he was having family worship here at home with you, some years ago?”

“He picked up the book and was looking through its pages without Brother Thornbush knowing it,” was the prompt reply.

Now this answer was not satisfactory to Mrs. McSquint, for had she not heard with her own ears, Brother Thornbush, in the most sarchin’ sermon he ever delivered, refer to this little circumstance as one of the descendin’ stair steps, which led the young man into the depths of in-i-quitty? When her minister painted a picture and spread it over her brain, it was not easily rubbed out, especially by the boy’s mother, who, she was already persuaded, was apologizing for her fallen son.

“Is there anything else you wish to know?” asked Mrs. Wallop sarcastically.

“Oh, yes, Mrs. Wallop, for I felt so bad for you that I could not rest of nights until I had seen you, and heard from your own lips about this ‘calamitory.’”

“I believe I have answered all your questions,” answered Mrs. Wallop.

“What do you think made Theophilus leave home?” and she laid great stress on the words “do you.”

“He left home, I think, because his father punished him for striking his brother.”

“Why should he strike his brother who

was always so good and kind, for Samuel and Jerry are so good to each other."

"He was not always kind to Theophilus, and this morning, I have since learned, he used unbecoming language about Mr. Clayborn's daughter, which excited Theophilus to hit him."

How long this conversation, including the cross-examination and answers thereto, would have continued, no one knows, but for the happening of a little incident which caused Mrs. McSquint to raise the turkey-wing she was at the time using as a fan and signal silence, for she had discovered some person near the door.

In a moment more Dick Spooner took off his hat and bowed politely to the two ladies. He was not acquainted with Mrs. McSquint, although he had seen her at the meeting. He had caught the last answer given by Mrs. Wallop, in which she explained why Theophilus had struck Samuel on the day of his departure. Dick had gotten a piece of information he was not looking for on that evening, for he had come over to talk with Mr. Wallop about the making of the will if a suitable opportunity offered. He had seen "stockin' John" hitched with a side-saddle on and was curious to hear any thing which might be said, and had been so quiet in his movements that he had heard a little of the conversation unobserved, but was now in a pickle for a plausible excuse for his sudden appearance.

He was troubled at the time with a fever-blister on his lip, and seizing this as a starting-point, asked Mrs. Wallop if she knew what was good for a sore mouth?

"Alum," said she.

"Alum's good," said Mrs. McSquint, "but there's nothing like 'yaller root,'"

“Could I get some alum or yellow root, either one, of you?” said Dick, addressing Mrs. Wallop.

“Sit down, Dick, and I will see if I have some, before you leave.” There was something in her tone that indicated to him that she did not wish him to leave right away. He accordingly took his seat, placed his hat on the table, and assumed the attitude of one who had come to pass the evening. Mrs. McSquint looked at the sun, and said “she would have to go home and get a ‘snack’ for Jerry.” She at once commenced pleading with Mrs. Wallop to be sure and come to see her soon, for she was so lonely; and manifested such signs of immediate departure, that Dick very politely said he would bring her horse nearer the house and help her on.

He took his hat and went to the horse and noted very carefully the three white legs, and the further fact that “stockin’ John” had a habit of turning the toes or front part of his hind feet inward, and on a further examination found that he was wearing shoes considerably worn. These were not extraordinary facts, but were of much interest to Dick, or he would not have examined them so closely.

Mrs. McSquint was soon mounted and hurried away, having performed a neighbor’s part at least, as she soliloquized to herself.

“Well, Dick, I am glad you came over, for you and Theophilus were such good friends that it does me good to see you.”

“We are as good friends as ever, if not better,” said he.

“They have not made you believe he is a thief, then,” she said, as the tears came to her eyes.

“I wish everybody was as honest as he.”

“Yes, poor boy, he was so kind to me, and was nearly all the company I had.” And she cried as if her heart were broken, making Dick feel very sad indeed.

“You have no idea where he intended to go?” he said, when she became quiet.

“No, he never said a word when he left, but he looked so pale and the tears stood in his eyes as he passed the door.” And again the mother’s grief overcame her, and Dick thought it best to change the subject.

“Mrs. McSquint is very much interested in your troubles, I suppose.”

“I do not know, but she is very inquisitive.”

“Samuel feels badly because of Theophilus’ trouble as well as Mr. Wallop.” (He did not intend the latter part of the sentence when he began it.)

“Samuel never mentions his name to me; he has taken up with Jerry Halter, and they are together so much that I don’t know how he feels nowadays.”

“He is lonesome, I suppose, and has taken Jerry as a friend in place of Theophilus.”

“I don’t know as to that, for he and Theophilus never got along well together; but since he has gone away he stays a great deal with Jerry.

Dick did not feel like asking her any further questions, but would have liked to have told her his opinion of the whole matter, if he dared, but he knew that he ought not to confide his secrets to her at this time at least. He told her he must leave, so she gave him some dry yellow root, and told him to come and see her

often, as she felt that he was about the only friend she had left.

He went away to his home in a more serious mood than was usual for his good-nature. He had never been cared for in his youth by a mother's tender hands. He reflected that he had been tossed about among strangers all his life, and after witnessing the grief and real love which Mrs. Wallop had manifested for her absent boy, he bemoaned his lot for being left alone in the world. How Theophilus could have left this good, kind-hearted mother, whatever the cause, puzzled him. Her last words had deeply moved him, and he was determined to renew his effort in a search for facts which would clear up the crime, if possible. The week was nearly gone but he had not been idle. He had discovered a fact or two which to his mind needed further tracing. Early in the week, it occurred to his inexperienced mind that he might possibly do some work in the neighborhood of Mr. Pepper's, and consequently he made his way to that place on foot. He stopped at a house very near the road leading east from Mr. Pepper's and about a mile distant therefrom.

He reached the house just before the dinner hour, from a westerly direction, and inquired the way to Mr. Clayborn's. He was directed by an elderly gentleman, who gave his name as Oliver Latemeal.

"Is this the neighborhood where the money was stolen a few weeks ago?" inquired Dick.

"Yes, jest a mile back."

"Have they caught the thief yet?"

"No, I guess not; they are not trying very hard, don't think."

“It was a pretty bold trick, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, but if they hadn’t been showing their money to everybody they would not have lost it,” he said.

“Who do they accuse of the crime?”

“A man by the name of Wallop, a young feller who stayed all night there.”

“Oh, I reckon they will get him yet, won’t they?”

“I don’t know whether they will or not, and I don’t know whether he is the right man when they do get him,” said Mr. Latemeal.

“Is there more than one suspicioned of the crime?” asked Dick, growing more interested.

“Not that I know of.”

“Then why do you seem to doubt whether Wallop is the right man?”

“I don’t know whether I ought to tell or not,” said he.

“If you know any fact that would lead to the detection of the thief I should think you ought to tell it,” said Dick.

“Yes, I expect so, but Mrs. Pepper and my old woman don’t agree very well, and I don’t like to meddle.”

This conversation was held near the fence between the house and the road. Dick was getting much interested in Mr. Latemeal’s mysterious statements, and wanted to get his notion of the affair, so was studying the best mode to proceed when dinner was called.

Dick readily accepted an invitation to dine with him, but was not very warmly received by the lady of the house, who was somewhat prejudiced against strangers. On entering the house, he saw an emaciated boy sitting in the corner, who had evidently passed through a

spell of fever, and speaking kindly asked him if he had been much sick.

"Yes, I was pretty bad when Surrilda Pepper had her money stoled."

"And that's why I happen to know a little something about it," said the boy's father.

"You was sitting up with the boy at the time?" suggested Dick.

"Eggs-zackly," said he, motioning Dick to the table.

"It is none of my business, perhaps," said Dick, but I would like to know whether you saw Mr. Wallop the night of the crime?"

"I did not that I know of, for he was afoot."

"Then I presume you saw someone on horseback."

"Now stranger, I don't want to go to court about this thing, and have never told anybody what I know, and don't want to meddle in it."

"If you know anything that would convict the guilty party, you certainly would be doing the community in which you live a great service by letting it be known; and if you know any fact or circumstance which would shield an innocent person, then common humanity ought to induce you to make it public at once," said Dick, earnestly.

"That's what I've been telling him all the time, for old Miss Pepper wouldn't keep anything back for you," interposed Mrs. Latemeal.

"Yes, that's the trouble with women; you talk too much," said her husband.

"I'd rather talk too much than to keep things to myself that ought to be known," retorted his wife a little angrily.

"Well, nobody asked about it until this gentleman did," he said in an apologizing tone.

“And you did not care about volunteering your knowledge,” said Dick.

“Eggs-zackly, and now, stranger, all I saw was this :

“About half past eleven o’clock, the night the money was taken, I saw a horse going west, and a few minutes after twelve of the same night, I saw the same horse going east.”

“What was the color of the horse,” said Dick, dropping his fork on the floor.

“I could not tell that eggs-zackly, but he had three or four white feet, and his body at night looked dark ; it was starlight and I could not see very plainly.”

“Was the horse shod?”

“It appeared so next morning from the tracks I saw.”

“Did you make any measurement of the tracks?”

“I did, and they were four inches and a half wide, and five and three-quarter inches long.”

“There was someone riding the horse of course?”

“Yes, the horse was not loose.”

“Could you give a description of the man riding?”

“I could not, for I was twenty-five or thirty feet away, and the man did not stop, but kept going on in a pace, if I mistake not.”

“Is this all you know about the matter?”

“Yes, that’s all I saw.”

“Of course,” said Mrs. Latemeal, speaking up, “I did not see the horse, but I’m purty shure that it was the same that passed here on Sunday before, now you hear it,” she said, as she made a dash for the teakettle which was boiling over on the fire.

Dick was considerably excited over this little narrative, and after finishing the meal, and thanking his host for the entertainment, he took his departure, determined to trace the horse and rider further if possible. He quietly worked the neighborhood for two days longer without further success, and was on his way back to Mr. Flint's, when in passing Mr. Wallop's, he saw "stockin' John" hitched to the fence as herein before stated, and it was the story of Mr. Latemeal which caused him to scrutinize the horse so closely.

He was tired and went to bed that night at an early hour, fully convinced in his own mind that Theophilus Wallop had not stolen Mrs. Pepper's money.

CHAPTER XII.

"I BELIEVE I did not ask your name," said Mr. Grewel, a farmer, addressing his hired hand, who had worked for him the last two days.

"My name is Wallop, Theophilus Wallop," was the answer.

This question was asked at the supper table on the second Saturday evening after Theophilus had left home. He had stopped at this gentleman's house, some thirty miles west of St Louis, Missouri, to rest from his long and tiresome journey.

"Wallop, did you say," while he and his wife looked earnestly into each other's faces.

"Yes sir, that is my name."

"Where is your home?" he inquired.

"Up to two weeks ago, I resided in southern Indiana."

“Are you acquainted with Reuben Pepper?” was the next question.

“No sir, I am not, but I think I stopped with a gentleman by that name. Yes, I think his name was Reuben, or at least his wife called him by that name,” said Theophilus as he went on with the meal.

Mr. Grewel and his wife by this time were gazing into each other's faces with great astonishment, unobserved by Theophilus whose mind was on a different subject entirely.

“What is your father's given name?” said Mrs. Grewel, thinking to relieve her husband for the moment.

“Anthony,” he answered, and for the first time noticed that the lady had pushed her plate back, and was giving him a look anything but complimentary.

“Are you acquainted with the people in southern Indiana?” ventured Theophilus, not knowing how else to learn the cause of the strange appearance of his questioners.

“No, I moved from Ohio here,” was Mr. Grewel's reply. He got up from the table and went into an adjoining room, where Mrs. Grewel followed him, leaving Theophilus to finish his supper alone.

He heard a low and rapid conversation between the man and his wife, but could not hear but little.

“He's the fellow sure, as true as you live,” exclaimed the lady.

“Yes, his own statements convict him,” answered her husband.

Theophilus did not hear the name of the person referred to as “the fellow” but the conversation at the table, and the sudden departure

of the parties from the room, had awakened his curiosity and a queer feeling which caused him to cut his meal short. He too walked into the room, and found the couple near the window standing up. The lady was holding a paper in her hand which she dropped upon his entrance.

“Anything strange or startling in the paper?” he asked, looking steadily first at one and then at the other. There was no reply to this question, but Mr. Grewel somewhat nervously handed him the *St. Louis*——, and pointed to a marked paragraph, while his good wife now pale and trembling took a hurried position at the rear of her husband, and acted as though there was a live mouse near by.

His eye instantly caught the following :

“A BOLD AND DARING THIEF.”

[Extract from *Louisville Courier*.]

——, IND., June——, 1860.

“Great excitement now prevails in this heretofore quiet country, on account of the theft of \$600.00 in gold coin, being taken from Mrs. Surrilda Pepper, a lady residing with her husband, Reuben Pepper, some nine miles south of this place. The larceny was committed on Tuesday night of last week. It seems that Mrs. Pepper had the money hidden between two stones in her spring house, not being willing to risk it about the dwelling. Late in the afternoon of the crime a young man hailing from a neighborhood in the southeastern part of the county, and heretofore bearing a good reputation, called on Mr. Pepper for a night’s lodging, and was kindly taken in, the result be-

ing that during the night when all were asleep, he decamped leaving poor Mrs. Pepper \$600.00 worse off in worldly goods. She did not miss her money, however, until late in the afternoon of the next day when a posse of men started in search of the villain, but up to the last accounts he had given his pursuers the dodge, and had struck out for the far west. This young rogue, who is not yet eighteen years of age, goes by the euphonious name of Theophilus Wallop, son of Anthony Wallop, a wealthy farmer, who has the sympathy of the community around him. It appears that on the morning of the day of the crime, the young reprobate first assaulted his brother, and when his father attempted to prevent further trouble, he seized a piece of timber and struck the old gentleman a murderous blow on the head, and at once left home for the west, making Mrs. Pepper his first victim. He will doubtless be indicted by the grand jury, and every possible effort made for his capture and conviction."

LATER.

"It has just been learned through his older brother Samuel, that the boy early in life showed a tendency to commit various crimes, and especially that of theft; and so worked up over the matter is his father, that through the advice of friends he has made his will, cutting the young scoundrel off from any part of the estate."

As Theophilus hurriedly glanced down the page, and read the account of the crime, and saw himself directly charged with its commission, a death-like pallor came over his face, and the paper quivered as he held it in his trembling

hand. He could not trust his own eyes, and again read to himself the account of the terrible affair. His great excitement increased at each perusal, until his frame shook like a leaf. His ghastly features and quivering form were stared at by the cat-like eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Grewel until they had more than satisfied themselves of his guilt. Naturally enough they could see conclusive evidences of villainy in each movement, or the lack of one, on his part. It was not often that these good people had an opportunity to feast their eyes on a genuine outlaw, and they watched with eagerness the writhings and contortions of a conscience-stricken man suddenly coming in contact with the knowledge that his crime was known to the public. Already the good people before him, in the honesty of their hearts, had condemned and consigned him to a felon's cell. It was to them an easy matter indeed, to read guilt in each line and movement of his white and death-like face. All the while thoughts and emotions were rushing upon the young man well calculated to shock and unnerve him.

On reading his own name in connection with the crime, he instantly remembered that the date of the crime corresponded with that of the night when he stayed at Pepper's. He also remembered that he had left unobserved at four o'clock in the morning, and that it was the very day of his difficulty at home. It was a cruel and unexpected blow and almost froze him to the spot. It was some time before he was able to utter a single word, and when he was able he was not so inclined. He gripped the paper as though his hands were made of

iron, and turning to Mr. Grewel, said in a husky voice: "May I keep this paper?"

"I—I suppose so," faltered he, while his wife seized him by his arm.

"I will be obliged to call on you for the small amount you owe me," said Theophilus, astonished at the sound of his own voice.

"Well, I do not mind paying you," he said after some hesitation, "but I am not certain but that, under the circumstances, I ought to retain the money as well as yourself until an officer can take you in charge," he said, feeling it his duty to uphold the laws of his country.

"I do not recognize your right to detain me, nor to withhold what is due me," said Theophilus excitedly.

"Very well, I admit that I have no authority to arrest you."

"Then pay me and I will go," added Theophilus. At this point Mrs. Grewel whispered in her husband's ear, and that gentleman having handed him two dollars, Theophilus took the money without a word and passed out to another room in search of a few extra garments which he carried with him, when his attention was arrested by a man on horseback, to whom Mr. Grewel and his wife ran in great haste. They held a hasty conversation, and the gentleman having dismounted, the three came back to the house just as Theophilus was coming out of the door.

"Mr. Tighthouse," exclaimed Mr. Grewel in an imperious tone, "this young man is an Indiana outlaw, and with your assistance, I will put him under arrest."

"It is a base falsehood," said Theophilus, excitedly, with the fire of passion and desper-

ate rage flashing from his eyes. "You have neither the authority nor the power to hold me, and I advise you to keep your hands off of me." At this Mrs. Grewel set up a shriek which would have attracted the attention of a passer-by half a mile distant.

He observed that Mr. Tighthouse was not inclined to molest him, and his last words had rendered Mr. Grewel more conservative, so he took up his line of march, in a westerly course, not failing to glance over his shoulder occasionally to see that he was not pursued.

Whatever effort, if any, Mr. Grewel and his neighbors made to overtake him, the event can only be conjectured, for he never visited that particular neighborhood afterward. It was almost night, and his excitement caused by Grewel's attempted arrest did not wear off until he was some miles away, when he began to analyze his trouble.

He carried in his pocket the paper which to him contained worse than a death-warrant. He had left his home proud of his good name among those with whom he had been raised. It was his ambition to make and retain the friendship of the good people he came in contact with, but every hope seemed blasted, and it was a heavy heart indeed which he carried as he dragged his weary body along the dark and unknown road. But three short weeks before, he was the peer of all his associates, now he was regarded as a thief and felon. He was hundreds of miles from a single acquaintance, with less than a dozen dollars to his name, while he felt that he was to pass his days as a fugitive, hunted down as a robber and outlaw.

He wondered whether all his old associates would believe him guilty, and join in his persecution. Ah, there was kind-hearted Dick Spooner, with whom he had so often talked about earning for himself a great name and fortune; would not he stand up for him while he was being branded as a thief? No; what could anyone say when evidences were all against him? He did not despair entirely, for he knew in his inmost soul, that even if his father had disinherited him and placed him deeper down in the estimation of the people, still that good old mother would plead and pray for him as of old, and he sat down beneath the stars where, in spite of his efforts, the tears stole down his cheeks.

Again the image of Nellie and his promised letter to her of his whereabouts shot across his burning brain, and a cold shudder passed over him as he remembered her, and numbered her as one among those who called him a thief and a villain. He could imagine a sadness creeping over her face as she thought that a felon was carrying her picture among the highwaymen of the west. Her last kind look and utterance were fresh in his memory, and pierced his soul as he dropped down in the shadow of a great oak tree, against the trunk of which he rested his throbbing head and gazed at the glittering stars above him. What course should he pursue? How could he ever again meet a former acquaintance or associate without shrinking from their presence in shame and disgrace? Many questions of similar import he asked himself, but the thought that he had been branded as a thief and outlaw, both at home and abroad, would chill his blood afresh

and the great drops of perspiration would trickle down his face. Once he determined to retrace his steps homeward, with the small amount of money he had left, and give himself up to the officers of the law, but the thought of being placed in prison to await his trial, and then consigned to the penitentiary for years perhaps, made him abandon the idea, and he preferred death itself almost to such a condition.

He, of course, was conscious of his innocence, but he had no money for defense, nor means of proving it, and was not imbued with such Puritan ideas, as to believe that an all-wise Providence would come to his aid and save him from a verdict of the jury, in the face of a warped and distorted public opinion. His young mind had been convinced that situated as he was, neighborhood rumors and sensational stories were too strong for him to overcome. For hours he remained restless and undecided, until at last worn out, he dropped into an easy sleep, from which he awoke as daylight dawned. He was near the Missouri River, and at once started up the muddy stream, not knowing or caring where he might stop. He rushed along at a rapid pace, for physical exertion gave his troubled mind rest.

A few days of pedestrian effort brought him in sight of Jefferson City, with its beautiful state buildings resting on the very prominent elevation on the south side of the river. Just before he reached the outskirts of the city, he saw a high stone wall, inclosing several acres of stony, broken land; on top of this wall, a sentinel at each corner paced silently back

and forth. Inquiring of a laborer, he learned that the wall inclosed the penitentiary of the state, where many hundreds were inclosed, shut off from the sunshine of liberty because of crimes committed; while others were there, perhaps as innocent victims of unfortunate circumstances.

While he had not determined where he would stop, just yet, it was at once settled in his mind that Jefferson City would not be his future home, and he continued his march up the valley of the "Mad River." In the meantime, Mr. Grewel, feeling that he himself would not be entirely free from guilt, if he kept to himself the knowledge that he had actually seen and attempted to arrest the absconding thief, wrote and mailed to Reuben Pepper the following letter:

ST. CHARLES, Mo., 1860.

Mr. Reuben Pepper, Esq.

DEAR SIR:—I feel it my duty as a good citizen, who desires to see the laws of the country enforced against crimes and criminals, to address you this letter. I recently read an account of the theft of your wife's money, and unconsciously, of course, employed the thief who remained at my residence but a very short time. He was a broad-shouldered man, and confessed that his name was Theophilus Wallop, and a son of Anthony Wallop. I confronted him with the commission of the deed, and had him read the account of it in the presence of my wife and myself. When he had gotten through with it, he was as pale as death, and trembled from head to foot and

began to get ready to leave, placing the paper in his pocket.

Of course, I had no authority to arrest him, but one of my neighbors came by and we thought it our duty to do so, and I so told him.

He looked so villainous at me and defied me to touch him, and so frightened my wife, that we concluded to let him go, as neither of us was armed, so he struck out in a westerly direction. He must be a very desperate scoundrel, for I am sure he would have murdered me if I had not allowed him to go. He did not deny taking the money, nor manifest any symptom of innocence, but every feature marked him as a thief, and I hope you may yet be able to capture him, and bring him to justice.

Yours until death,

R. GREWEL.

This important letter reached Mr. Pepper in due time, and that worthy gentleman read it over many times and analyzed its contents with great pride and pleasure. He had been addressed as "Reuben Pepper, Esq." which did not escape his attention, and he took delight in showing the words to Surrilda.

It was agreed by them that the letter ought to be published at once, for the whole country would be aroused and their names become famous, and accordingly it was sent to the "Louisville Courier" with the request that other papers would "please copy." The letter made its appearance in a few days, and again the confession was on everybody's lips and Theophilus Wallop was again more savagely than ever placed on the rack of public

opinion. This time it was not only a charge of theft, but coupled with it was the statement that he had confessed to a man in Missouri that he did the deed.

The letter was read by everybody who could get the paper, and those who could not buy one borrowed one. Charity McSquint made it her especial duty to carry the paper in her bosom, and visit her neighbors, and read and dilate by the hour on the lack of "trainin'" Theophilus had received, and point to Jerry, with motherly pride, as a shining example of her own efforts, while Surrilda continued in the role of a much injured person. Brother Thornbush who had first called the letter a "confession," said that he had expected as much, for "the wicked flee when no man pursueth," and so saying, he took his goose-quill pen from behind his ear and proceeded to complete the sermon he was preparing on the text "Be assured your sin will find you out."

The sad news had fallen heavily on Mrs. Wallop, who could not and would not believe her son guilty. But the sad expression of her face and deep furrows around her tear-stained eyes, told their own story.

And during these days of pain and anguish Theophilus was slowly plodding his way up the river, placing all the distance possible between him and the scenes of his childhood. He passed St. Joseph, Mo., where he stopped a short while, then made his way to Iowa, and there obtained employment and settled down for the time being.

CHAPTER XIII.

JERRY HALTER did not fail, of course, in keeping his engagement with Nellie for Sunday afternoon, and appeared at her home after he had eaten his dinner. It was just at the time when the second great excitement over the "Wallop confession" was at its highest stage, and for fear he might not be able to entertain his "sweetheart" properly, he had equipped himself with the paper containing the Grewel letter. Jerry was not a close observer, else he might have detected at once a shade of displeasure in the girl's face upon his first appearance.

He always assumed that a great importance was attached to himself, and his bold nature obscured the faculty of close perception. On this occasion he marched into the presence of the family with a familiarity characteristic of his egotistical nature.

He had concluded that he would at first discuss the latest Wallop sensation, and after that was out of the way, he would talk love to Nellie, and accordingly he asked Mr. Clayborn if he had read the "confession."

"I have read the Grewel letter, if that is what you call a 'confession.'"

"That would seem to remove all doubt of his guilt," said Jerry, fumbling in his pocket for the paper.

"Not to any unprejudiced mind, I think," said Mr. Clayborn, as he fastened his eyes on Halter with such a scrutinizing gaze, that the young man inwardly wished he would look some other way.

“Well”—said he, after some little embarrassment, “I am not a judge of such matters, but everybody seems to be satisfied of his guilt.”

“Public opinion is not always a sure guide in such matters.”

“But what about his not denying the crime when he was confronted with it,” asked Halter.

“That might or might not indicate guilt,” said Mr. Clayborn.

“He was trembling and frightened when he was charged with the crime,” said Halter, pushing the argument.

“He would have been an unnatural person indeed, if he had not been excited on learning that he was charged with so grave an offense,” continued Mr. Clayborn, watching the effect of his answer.

Halter could not but feel ill at ease, and remembering that Samuel had told him not to talk too much to the Clayborn’s, he abruptly broke off the conversation.

Nellie had listened to the dialogue on the part of Halter and her father with great interest, and especially did she note the more than ordinary earnestness in her father’s face, and her heart fluttered with a faint hope inspired by his words. She had been greatly depressed by the latest information, and was wearing a careworn look which had not escaped Mr. Clayborn’s notice. She had used her utmost endeavor, it is true, to hide her feelings and suppress the emotions of her young heart when the name of Theophilus was mentioned; but with his experience in life and natural tact for discerning matters, he suspected that a strong attachment existed on the

part of his daughter for the absent young man.

He was, therefore, interested in her welfare and happiness, and it was not surprising that he entered into the conversation with a degree of earnestness which brought the drooping spirit of his daughter to life, as water does the fading flower. She would have rejoiced if Halter had gone away at once, but she was under a promise to entertain him for a while at least, and the two walked out to the porch, where Jerry commenced a very common every-day conversation by appraising her that the weather was fine, and the nice season had arrived when it was delightful to enjoy the delicious scent of the new-mown hay, and walk beneath the heavy shade of the green trees, which were in full dress, and was in the act of proposing a stroll in search of flowers, when Nellie remarked that she was not feeling well and insisted on his being seated where they were.

He sat down near her, and gazed at her beautiful form and face, while her eyes were fixed on an object in the distance.

"I hope you are not feeling badly on account of Mrs. Wallop yet, are you?" he finally said.

"She deserves sympathy," said Nellie languidly.

"So she does, but it does no good to go into mourning over her troubles."

"I am real sorry for her," said Nellie.

"You are too young to commence fretting your life away over other people's misfortunes," he suggested.

"I am not fretting, but there is so much

mystery about the affair that I cannot help thinking about it," said Nellie.

"Can't you think of something more serious for your own interest?"

"I know of nothing more so," she replied.

"But would you not like to have a good home of your own?"

"Thank you, I am very comfortable where I am."

"Well, Nellie, I have felt—I have had a very deep feeling, I might say that—that—"

"Well you need not feel that way any more," she replied, as she arose and hurried for his hat and handed it to him, which he took in his somewhat nervous hand. She expressed the hope that he would feel better in the future, and with the words "good evening," Jerry Halter was left in the most awkward predicament of his life, while Nellie disappeared through the house.

The hot blood rushed to his face as he took his departure, feeling that he had indeed "gotten the mitten." He reached the gate without looking back or raising his eyes from the path he was treading.

"Hello there, Jerry, what's your hurry?" said Dick Spooner, coming toward the gate, only a few feet away.

"It is none of your business," said Halter angrily.

"Certainly not, but I thought you were engaged for this afternoon."

"What's that to you?" he said, as he brushed past Dick hurriedly.

"Oh, nothing, only if you are going away I believe I will stop a while."

"Dick Spooner, if it were not Sunday and

“ST. JOSEPH, Mo., July, — 1860.

“MISS CLAYBORN:—(for I dare not call you else while a criminal charge stands against me) I inclose you an account of the stealing of Mrs. Pepper’s money, in which I am denounced in cruel terms as the thief. As I will sometime render an account to a court higher and purer than any on earth, I can truthfully say that I am not guilty in any way whatever. Will write you again if ever I emerge from the shadow of my great sorrow. In the meantime will pray an all-wise Providence that justice may overtake the true criminal.

“Your Well-wisher,

“THEOPHILUS WALLOP.”

She read and re-read the short and pointed letter, and as the hot burning tears stole down her cheeks, she thanked heaven for his explicit denial of the crime and awful charge. She had not failed to note the delicate manner in which he addressed her, for she reasoned that his manly heart would not allow him to call her “friend” while the stigma of thief rested against him. His appeal to a higher than an earthly court in declaring his innocence, and his resolution of prayer to the Most High that justice might overtake the perpetrator of the crime, had melted her soul, and in the midst of her anguish for his misfortune, she rejoiced that her love, now ardent and deep, belonged to one so noble.

She lingered long over the letter, forgetting that she had left Dick alone, and suddenly remembering the fact, she set to work to efface the evidence of tears in her eyes, but as

usual in such cases, she did not succeed, and on her return to the room, Dick remarked :

“ I’ll bet that was a love-letter, Nellie.”

“ Oh ! you must think I am in love with everybody,” said she, her face flushing up.

“ No I don’t, for if I did I would come in for a share.”

“ Dick, you know I like you.”

“ I am afraid you don’t shed any tears over me,” said he, laughing.

“ How could anyone shed tears over you, when you are always laughing?”

“ They might laugh until they cried at least.”

“ Maybe I’ll try that some day when your mustache matures,” she said playfully.

“ There now ; I will quit, if you will,” said he, laughing, and going through the motion of curling a supposed growth on his upper lip.

“ I reckon you wouldn’t let a fellow read that letter would you?” inquired Dick with some anxiety.

“ Yes, I will, if you won’t tease me about it.”

“ Upon my honor, I won’t,” he said, as she handed him the letter.

Dick read it carefully, and was evidently pleased with the contents, for he slapped his hands on his knees, and exclaimed : “ Its just like him ; he don’t say much, but he says it strongly, and I would bet my life that he is heard from again.”

“ Why so, Dick ? ”

“ Because I have always had faith in his honesty, and this is just such a letter as an innocent person would write.” Just then Mr. Clayborn stepped into the room, and shaking hands with Dick, as was his custom with

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“ Why so, Dick ? ”

“ Because I have always had faith in his honesty, and this is just such a letter as an innocent person would write.” Just then Mr. Clayborn stepped into the room, and shaking hands with Dick, as was his custom with

everyone, and seeing the letter in Dick's hand, asked what was the latest news.

Dick was a little taken back and hesitated, but Nellie summoned a little extra courage and said:

"Father, I have received a letter from Theophilus, which you may read if you like," and she took it from Dick's hand and gave it to him.

He placed his spectacles on his eyes and read the letter to himself, while the two watched his features closely. When he had finished it, he glanced at Dick good humoredly and said:

"He does not make a 'confession' does he?"

"Indeed he does not," answered Dick.

"What do you think of the letter?" inquired his daughter.

"I am favorably impressed with the language and tone of it, Nellie," he said kindly.

"Wonder what Mrs. McSquint would say of it," interposed Dick.

"She would certainly have her opinion," said Mr. Clayborn.

"And she would express it," said Nellie, smiling.

"Time," said Mr. Clayborn, "is the great leveler of events, and it will in all probability clear up this mystery, and point out to a certainty the party or parties connected with the larceny."

So saying he left Dick and Nellie to themselves. It was getting late, however, and Dick made ready to leave, for he was feeling encouraged and determined to do some work during the coming week.

“Good-bye, Nellie, I am going to pry around some this week and see if I can learn something.”

“What new plan have you, and where are you going?”

“I shall go to the ‘Pepper neighborhood,’ and possibly get a straw or two,” so saying he left.

He did go there, for it was that week he visited Mrs. Latemeal, and learned of the horse with the three white feet which had gone both east and west on the night of the larceny, and wound up his week’s work with the incident at Mr. Wallop’s, when he secured yellow root to cure his “sore mouth.”

Nellie was more cheerful, and the next week she attended to her household duties with more alacrity than usual, but she could give no reason for it, for after all it was to be a long time, perhaps, before she received another letter from her now acknowledged-to-herself-at-least, “sweetheart.” But at the close of the next week, when Dick returned and informed her of his discoveries, she was fully satisfied of the innocence of Theophilus, and the guilt of others, one at least, and somehow, she could not help feeling a chilly sensation when she thought of Jerry Halter. Dick did not remain long on this visit, for he felt, as he said, that the “trail was getting warmer.”

Again on the following Monday he visited Mrs. Wallop, this time for the purpose of ascertaining whether she had heard from Theophilus, and on his arrival found her alone as usual. She was dusting the furniture of the best room, and greeted him with a friendly smile that made him feel comfortable, and he

noticed a brightness in her usually sad face which led him to think that she had gotten news of some kind, not unpleasant at least.

“You are a good boy, Dick, to come and see me,” she said, as she grasped his hand and looked smilingly into his face.

“Yes, I like to come over once in a while, for you know Theophilus and I were like brothers.”

“Take a chair, and I will show you a letter from Theophilus,” and she went to a stand table near by, and opening the family Bible, brought forth an envelope containing the letter which he read, and as we cannot do justice to it by description, we think the reader should have the benefit of an exact copy of it, except dates, which is as follows :

“ST. JOSEPH MO., July, — 1860.

“DEAR MOTHER:—I cannot delay writing you an account of existing circumstances, for I know the horrible charge against me has broken your heart. Mother, as God is my judge, I am as innocent of stealing Surrilda Pepper’s money as a unborn babe, but I did stay all night at her husband’s house, the night of the crime. It was late when I got there, and I left the house at daybreak in the morning, getting my breakfast about three miles west with a gentleman whose name I did not learn. I traveled on foot for many days, and only learned that I was accused of the crime near St. Charles, in this state, from a paper a Mr. Grewel had in his possession. I ought to have written you sooner, but I was so unnerved, shocked, and distressed, that I could do nothing but move on, to I

know not where, for when you get this letter I will be farther away. My father's will does not distress me, yet I feel that some other hand should have stricken the last and hardest blow. You well know that I did not strike, or otherwise mistreat my father, when I left home nor at any other time. The cause of my leaving is not entirely unknown to you, for many times do I remember of your pleading in my behalf when being mistreated.

“The home of my birth and of my childhood had grown to me to be a dark and gloomy spot with no attractions except your kind words. I longed for a home and place of abode where gentle smiles and kind words, instead of a brutal instrument of punishment, would meet me at the door; but what will be my fate, my Creator only knows.

“Mother, do not, I beg of you, worry on my account, for I have a little hope that I may rise yet from beneath this load of torturing disgrace, and be able to repay you, in a measure, for a mother's kindness. Say to father, that I send him my kindest regards, with the hope that he may not regard me as a criminal, and that he may live long and be convinced that I am a better boy than present surroundings indicate. In conclusion I promise you again, as I have a hundred times before when I knelt at your feet, that I will remain honest, and no temptation shall lead me into the paths of wickedness and crime.

“God bless you, mother, and good-bye,

“THEOPHILUS.”

After reading the letter, Dick's eyes were filled with tears, and his heart with pity. He

gazed out of the window, while poor Mrs. Wallop rocked to and fro, keeping back as best she could her feelings mingled with pity and love for her persecuted boy.

“What does Mr. Wallop think and say of this letter?” said Dick, after some time had elapsed.

“I do not know what he thinks, for you know he does not talk much, but he has been restless every night since it came,” said Mrs. Wallop, wiping her eyes.

“What does Samuel say of it?” was the next query.

“He knows I have it, but he has never seen it or heard it read, to my knowledge.”

“That is strange,” he said, remembering that no mention had been made of Samuel in the letter.

“No it isn’t strange, if you knew him, for he never mentions his name, or hears it mentioned, without abusing him.”

“He yet feels badly towards Theophilus, because of their trouble when he left, I suppose.”

“They never did get along like brothers should,” she answered.

“And that was the real cause of his leaving?”

“Nothing else, except the trouble that day.”

“Who first told you, Mrs. Wallop, that Theophilus was accused of the crime?”

“I believe it was Brother Thornbush, a few days after he left.”

“Did he say where he got his information?”

“I think he said Samuel had heard it somewhere.”

“Was that at the time when the will was made?”

“No, it was a day or so before.”

“I suppose you were satisfied with the making of the will?”

“No, I did not want my husband to make the will, for I did not believe the story.”

“Who wrote it?”

“Brother Thornbush.”

“And he is the custodian, I suppose?”

“Yes. It was through his efforts and advice that it was made, and Mr. Wallop has great confidence in him, so had him keep it.”

Dick was now about to leave, but his questions had aroused Mrs. Wallop's curiosity somewhat, and before he left she asked:

“What do you think of this affair anyway?”

“I do not think Theophilus is guilty,” was his prompt reply.

“Who do you think did it, Dick?” This was a pointed question, and for a little while puzzled him, but he said: “You must excuse me, but I can't answer that at present,” and he went away, wondering how much grief a mother could undergo on account of her children; while she resumed her duties, waiting and watching over the interests of her husband and son who were at home, and praying for the absent one. Time rolled on, and the hours and days dragged their weary lengths along while the good mother and wife toiled from daylight until dark, in her efforts to make those around her comfortable and happy, with her heart overflowing with love and pity for her wandering boy.

Yet other scenes and darker days were be-

fore her, which she met and passed with that fortitude and endurance allotted to a devoted and Christian woman.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was not until near the middle of September following the incidents herein recorded, that Mrs. McSquint could find the time to visit her sister. This fact grieved her very much, for she had learned many things which she had stored away in her memory that ought to be known to Surrilda. She had arrived, however, and all the program of her reception had been gone through with, and the health of each one of the family reported to her entire satisfaction. Even Reuben's lame back was decidedly improved by the use of juices and roots, in accordance with a prescription left by her on a former visit. There had been no particular change in the furniture, either more or less, not even a change of location, except that after the loss of the money Reuben had procured an old musket, which had done service in the revolutionary war, and placed it over the head of the bed in which he and his wife passed their hours of repose. It was not an innocent looking weapon, for there was a hole in the muzzle which would admit a man's thumb; besides, it had attached to it a "flint lock," which reared back like an Indian tomahawk, holding the flint savagely in its jaws. It would have attracted the attention of most anyone, but Charity in particular, for she was a close observer of any changes or additions made in articles of household goods of those whom she visited.

She looked at this accession of surplus prop-

erty for some moments, and was noting its *marked resemblance to a gun*, when she placed her bonnet some three inches back on her head, and in a voice of great astonishment said :

“ Surrilda, what is that horrid thing over your bed ? ”

“ It is a musket or ‘ Yauger ’ some call it,” said her sister.

“ What is it for ? ”

“ Reuben had me get it for him after my money was stolen to shoot robbers and burglars with.”

“ You don’t say so ! ” and she looked around as though there was a skeleton or two near by.

“ He has never used it, has he ? ” continued Mrs. McSquint.

“ Well, yes, twice we heard something making a noise down towards the barn, and he shot to scare it away ; but he don’t like it much, I think, for the last time he shot it hurt his back.”

“ He did not shoot himself with it, did he ? ”

“ No, no—‘ It kind of went off at both ends like,’ Reuben said, when he came back to the house.”

“ No, it did not do any such thing,” exclaimed Reuben, who had been putting in his time, near the door, shaving out the material for a cross-bow for little Bob.

“ You ought to be mighty keerful with yourself when handling weepens like that, for I know what it is to be left a ‘ lone widder,’ ” said his sister-in-law.

This was a very flattering remark to Reuben, for he inwardly felt that Surrilda would indeed be helpless if he should suddenly be taken off at the muzzle of the “ Yauger.”

“It did not shoot at both ends, I think, but it acted very strange. I had heard something, I am easily waked since our misfortune, and got up and walked around the corner of the house and saw something creeping up to the barn. Now, I am not a man to be fooled with, as everybody knows, and I just pulled back and let drive, and when I came to I was laying on my back looking at the stars in the canopy.”

“Reckon you missed the man?” said Charity.

“Missed him! Well, there has been nobody sneaking around here since,” said Reuben, nodding his head.

“No, but our old cow has been lame ever since,” said little Bob, grinning significantly. This was an unfortunate interference on the part of the boy, who, if he had thought, would have known better than to speak up when his father was talking, for it always annoyed him, and was not in keeping with the training he had given his son.

He was much irritated at the boy's behavior, and began hastily to look around for a suitable instrument with which to impress him with better manners. To those who have had experience in such matters it is said that it is almost impossible to succeed in readily obtaining such a thing while the fever of passion is the highest; and so it was with Reuben; but he was not a man to be fooled with, and he succeeded in getting hold of a piece of split board, and made for Bob, who at once struck around the house as fast as his legs would carry him, with his father in close pursuit. They had made a circuit of the house once and were passing the door, when Mrs. Pepper flew out of the house like a mad hen, and seizing her husband

by the arm, in a voice that awakened the echoes, exclaimed :

“ Reuben Pepper, you strike that child of mine with a board if you dare ! ” and she put her fist up close to his face.

Mr. Pepper had stopped short at the first sound of her voice, and relapsed into a condition of innocuous desuetude. He did not speak, for it was all he could do to get his breath after his unusual exercise. He dropped his weapon and slowly marched away to the road fence and took his seat on the top rail, where he spent the next hour or two in whittling and thinking how hard it was for a good man to raise a child properly ; while Mrs. Pepper led little Bob into the house to his aunt, who had witnessed the little family episode with interest.

“ Surrilda, you will be the ruin of that child as sure as you are born.”

“ Well he shan’t be beaten with a clapboard, while I live,” said Surrilda, in a flutter of excitement.

“ No, I will agree that it is better to have a switch ready always, but when you can’t get one then you must pick up the first thing you see.”

“ My children are about as good as those who are beat to death all the time,” she responded.

“ Why, Surrilda, don’t you read the Scriptor, and han’t you heard Brother Thornbush preach and ‘ resort ’ on sparin’ the rod and spilin’ the child ? ”

“ Yes, but there is a difference between a rod and a clapboard.”

“ It’s all the same in meanin’, and it was nothin’ else that sent Theophilus Wallop to the

bad than his mother interferin' when his father was correctin' him," said Charity, despondingly.

"It may do to beat and pound real bad boys, but my children are good, and I can't bear to see them punished," said Surrilda, who felt unable to meet the stern logic of her sister.

"Isn't it too bad about that Nell Clayborn?" inquired Charity, satisfied that she had lectured her sister sufficiently as to her own household.

"What now? I haven't heard."

"Then it is because you do not live in my neighborhood."

"What has she done? Do tell me."

"Why, she is engaged to the thief who took your money, and would go to him and marry him if it were not for her father."

"Well, if that isn't awful, and Mr. Clayborn such a nice man!" said Surrilda, as she took her hands out of the dough which she was working.

"Well, it must be so, for I got it straight."

"Who told you?"

"Clarissy Cutright told me that the postmaster said they had been correspondin' some time, but it is talked all over our neighborhood."

"Does her father know about it for sure?"

"Of course he does, that is, that they were engaged, for he admitted that the fellow got dinner at his house the day he went away."

"Well, well! what is the country coming to? I can't have confidence in anyone in this day, it seems," said Mrs. Pepper.

"You can't tell who is honest, and there is no doubt that the girl knows all about your money," said Charity.

“Would anybody have thought it?” said Surrilda.

“I used to think so much of the Clayborn’s, but what I have heard lately has spilt ’em with me,” said Mrs. McSquint, with her hand against her jaw.

“I thought she looked sneaking the day of the out-door meeting,” said Surrilda, reflectively.

“Bless goodness! Jerry has quit going there, for I got suspicious once that he actually liked the gal, but he won’t speak to her now; no, indeed he won’t.”

“Because he thinks that she knows more than she will tell about my money,” chimed in Mrs. Pepper.

“That’s the whole cause of it, for he went to see the postmaster himself, to learn if the scoundrel was actually writin’ to her, and sure enough, he was.”

And with these broad statements, conjectures, and insinuations, Charity branched off into many side issues, and unloaded her mind of many little things not necessary to mention. Dinner was ready, and it took but little coaxing to bring Reuben down from his perch, who, though a little poutish, did full justice to a plate of boiled cabbage and bacon, and all was serene again, but no further mention was made of the “Yauger.”

Mrs. McSquint did not remain long in the afternoon, for it was a long way home and Jerry was alone, and the “brindle” cow was so bad to kick that she was afraid he could not manage her.

She mounted “stockin’” John and hurried back home, where she arrived about sunset.

This was her last mission in sowing broadcast the latest complication of the crime, for she had visited those of her immediate neighborhood, and upon the simple fact that a letter in the handwriting of Theophilus had been received by Miss Clayborn, and that Jerry had suddenly changed his good opinion of her, she had unhesitatingly charged her with a guilty knowledge of the crime. And while she was on her way to visit her sister in the morning, Clarissy Cutright, heretofore mentioned, had left her dishes unwashed and hurried a mile and a half to Mr. Clayborn's, where, quivering with excitement, she proceeded to unbosom herself of some "talk" that was going the rounds of the neighborhood to Nellie.

"How are you, Miss Clayborn?" she said, on entering the door.

"Very well, thank you; how are you and your folks? Take off your bonnet, Mrs. Cutright, while I call auntie.

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "I just want to see you this morning, and I came in a hurry and left my work all undone, with no one with the children," she said, almost out of breath.

"What is it? Mrs. Cutright, you look excited."

"Nellie, you know I have always been your friend, as well as that of your family."

"Certainly; what can I do for you?" said Nellie, growing anxious.

"Oh, it is no favor I want, but it is for your good I came."

"What is wrong?" inquired Nellie, and the blood left her face.

"It is some bad talk you ought to know about."

“Please tell me at once,” said the excited girl.

“I knew it was not true when I heard it, and I could not rest until I had seen you and told you what some people are saying; now don’t get nervous.”

“But you make me nervous by delay.”

“Well, then, the talk is about you and Theophilus Wallop.”

“Can’t you be more definite?” said Nellie, trembling.

“Of course, I will tell you every word just as I heard it with my own ears, for when I repeat a thing it must be exactly word for word, and I was very careful to charge my memory, so that if it is disputed I can face them down in the matter.”

“Now, who has been talking about me? What did they say?” begged Nellie, almost out of patience.

“Charity McSquint, the old busybody, is the very one who told it to me, and I believe if you knew her as well as I do that you would not be so badly frightened.”

“You have told me who used the talk, but you have not told me a word that was said,” answered Nellie, in a tone of exhaustion.

“She, Charity McSquint, at the gate right in front of my house, not over one hour ago, in the presence of my children, while she was sitting on her old “stockin’” horse, on her road to Surrilda Pepper’s and just before she left, said that you knew all about Theophilus Wallop stealing her sister’s money, and that you and him were engaged to be married before he left; now you hear it, and just as she said it, too. And that is not all, for she said

that Jerry Halter told her he would prove it on you when the trial was had in court."

Nellie did not scream or faint, as Mrs. Cutright had feared at the time, but there was a feeling of deep grief and wounded pride manifest in her pale face and dark, piercing eyes. She arose from her seat, and extending her little hand to her informer, said :

"I thank you for the information ; auntie will be here in a moment, and I must ask you to excuse me," and so saying, she passed hurriedly out of the room and Mrs. Cutright saw nothing more of her, for after a few words with Auntie Clayborn, she went back home to her dishes and children. Nellie, after speaking to her aunt, had made haste to the field where her father and Joe were engaged about a fence.

She lost no time in giving to them both the details of Mrs. Cutright's story. Mr. Clayborn was never easily excited, but there was a deep shadow over his face, while Joe's eyes and mouth twitched convulsively, though the latter did not utter a word.

"Go to the house, dear, and the matter shall be righted," said Mr. Clayborn ; and as she started back, for the first time after hearing the dreadful news she burst into tears and wept as if her heart was broken, and only stopped when she had produced a bad case of headache. Mr. Clayborn and his son quit work ; Joe went directly to the barn and Mr. Clayborn went to the house. Neither had spoken a word after Nellie had left them. Mr. Clayborn had just taken a seat, while his daughter was sobbing on the sofa, when Auntie Clayborn thus said to him :

"Where is Joe going ?" And looking up, he

saw his son going out at the front gate with no extra clothing on except his vest. "Call him back, for he is excited," continued auntie to her brother, for she had been made acquainted with the trouble.

"No, sister, I do not know where he is going, but I think I will let Joseph alone." With this remark, he got up and walked backward and forward across the floor, repeating his own language, "I will let Joseph alone." He reflected to himself that he was one of the oldest settlers in that part of the country, that he had provided a good home for his sister and his children, who were nearer and dearer to him than all else. He had not, it is true, ruled his family with an iron hand, but his son and daughter were contented and happy with him, if unmolested, and if his son had gathered the idea from his training, or by inheritance or instinct, that it was his duty to protect his sister's rights and good name from scurrilous attacks, he would let him alone. Thus he meditated until he became, in a measure, himself again. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that he did not contemplate redress in the matter.

Joseph Clayborn was a muscular, well-built young man of medium height and twenty years of age. He was unusually good-natured, and possessed his father's genial qualities. No one in the country was more popular or freer from difficulties. He and Nellie had been devoted to each other from their infancy, and no human being, to his knowledge, had been brutal enough to utter a word against her good name.

When listening to the charges brought against her by Halter, who had so often enjoyed

the hospitalities of his father's house, he determined to protect her as best he could, and it was with this purpose in view that he had saddled a horse, and set out to hunt Halter and have a satisfactory retraction or explanation from him at once. He rode to the house of Mrs. McSquint, but Halter was not there, so he turned in the direction of Mr. Wallop's farm, and was within a short distance of the house when he met that young man in company with Samuel Wallop. He at once dismounted, and throwing the reins over one corner of the fence, walked forward some distance, until they met.

"Halter," said Joe, "I wish an explanation from you."

"What is it?" asked Halter.

"I hear that you charge my sister of having some knowledge of the theft of Mrs. Pepper's money."

"What of it, sir, if I did?"

"You will wish you had not before I get through with you," and instantly dealt him a blow in the face, and the two young men went at each other like tigers. Jerry was the larger of the two, and had he been quick and active he might have fared better, for he possessed superior strength. But it was evident from the beginning that Joe was terribly in earnest, and his blows fell thick and fast until Halter, early in the fight, was forced to the defensive. The blood was already streaming from his face and nose, while Samuel was shouting "murder" at the top of his voice.

Jerry finally grasped Joe's hand, and was in the act of getting his fingers in his mouth, but in so doing he left the way clear to his face, and he received a blow which sent him to the

ground with his antagonist on top of him, and again his face and eyes suffered a terrible bruising. Halter was now at a disadvantage, and called for Samuel to assist him, but his bosom friend had leaped the fence, and with his hair wildly floating in the air was making across the field homeward, at great speed, yelling for help most piteously. His cries were not in vain, for they brought Dick from his hiding-place in the bushes some distance away, where he had secreted himself to watch the movements of the two when they left the house. He arrived at the scene in time to hear Halter, now weak and exhausted, begging for his life and retracting his language toward Miss Clayborn, while Joe was bending over him, panting like an ox in fly-time, with a firm grip on his throat.

On seeing Dick, Joe released his victim, and going some distance away, lay down in the shade, while Dick removed Halter from beneath the rays of the sun to where he could get cooler air, of which he stood in great need. Samuel soon returned accompanied by his father, but they both stopped before reaching the spot and only came up when assured there was no danger. Even then Samuel hesitated and hung back, pale and trembling.

“What does all this mean?” inquired Mr. Wallop.

“It means that that dirty dog lying there has grossly slandered my sister, and paid a part of the penalty,” said Joe, as he rose to his feet. This was the first that Dick knew of the cause of the fight, and he was ready to give Joe his hand as a token of his approval.

The two young men took the nearest road

back to Mr. Clayborn's while Jerry was left in the keeping of Samuel and his father. Dick thought it was best for him to accompany Joe home and explain the matter to the family, which he did while Joe was changing clothes, and examining a few bruised spots on his now calm face.

"Well, Nellie, I don't think you will suffer much from Halter's tongue in the future."

"I hope not," said the girl, sadly.

"He isn't so handsome as when you saw him last," he said.

"Don't joke about it, for it is too serious a matter," she said.

"Oh, he is not hurt much, but he knows more than he did," said Dick, as he burst out laughing.

"You are hard-hearted, surely."

"No, I am selfish; for if it had not been for Joe, he would have pounded me up some day, and given my mustache a set-back," which remark forced Nellie to laugh, the very thing Dick wanted to see.

Mr. Clayborn's only remark was that he hoped this would end the trouble. And so it did, for the present, at least.

Jerry was soon able to get up and walk, and sullenly went to his home accompanied by his companion, where the two dressed his bleeding face and bruises as best they could.

"I told you not to talk too much," said Samuel.

"I will get even some day," said Jerry, sullenly.

"A still tongue for a wise head," suggested shrewd Samuel as he took his departure, leaving his friend to wear out his wrath and wres-

tle with his humiliation alone. He was greatly excited after his friend left him, and passed his time mostly in bed, from which he would occasionally arise and examine his swollen face and bloodshot eyes and indulge in threats of vengeance, as he realized that it would be many days before he would be fit to enter society.

The swelling in his face grew to large proportions by evening, and when Charity alighted from "stockin'" John one of his eyes was entirely closed, while the other had barely room to take in the light.

"Goodness alive!" screamed Mrs. McSquint. "I told you, Jerry, to be careful of 'old brindle' when you milked her," she said, as she discovered the only object of her affections lying on the bed.

Jerry made no response except a low moan, which made her exclaim "poor boy" as she placed a thumb and finger on either side of where his nose had been when she last saw him.

She was much alarmed, for he had closed the sight of his remaining eye, and presented a frightful appearance; but she did not wait by his bedside long, for she hurried away for slippery elm and oak bark, which she boiled to a poultice and spread over his dilapidated countenance. She discovered, however, other scars about his neck and scratches on his forehead, that made her wonder how "old brindle" could do so much service without claws, and she whispered: "Did the cow kick you, honey?"

"No," was his reply; and he told her how Joe Clayborn had slipped up behind him and struck him with a club when he was not looking, and how, after he was unconscious, the villain had beaten him in the face and left him for

dead, all because he had said his sister had received a letter from that thief, Theophilus Wallop. Mrs. McSquint listened to his pitiful story while her eyes moistened with tears, and she pitied "dear Jerry" and nursed him for many days before she pronounced him entirely out of danger. In the meantime she had put down Joe in her mind as almost as great a scoundrel as Theophilus.

CHAPTER XV.

THE assault on the good name of Miss Clayborn by Jerry Halter after her refusal to accept him as a suitor, with the supplemental help he received from his godmother, was not a success on his part but did much toward his downfall. The people were not ready to believe such insinuations and charges against a young and heretofore innocent girl, and the punishment he received at the hands of her brother was the theme of favorable comment in the neighborhood. He was not any longer a welcome guest among the better class of people—a fact which seemed to have a depressing effect upon him. It had been easy enough to prejudice the people against a young man who had mysteriously left home; but with a young lady who was not only pure and upright herself, but whose family was above reproach, it was quite a different matter, and like Reuben Pepper's "Yauger" had a recoil that did him injury. Many persons who had been willing, a short time ago, to join in denunciation of Theophilus Wallop, now were wondering in their minds why Halter and his very intimate friends were so deeply

interested in the crime and in associating other names with its knowledge and commission.

All in all, he had fallen in the estimation of his neighbors, and was regarded as a base slanderer who had been flogged for lying by a young man inferior in size and pretensions. It was at this period in Jerry's history when the great "Wallop scandal" was allowed to rest, except in the minds of a very few, for the country was now excited over the coming presidential election at which Mr. Lincoln was elected president.

Months went by without the matter being discussed, and it was not until the 15th day of March, 1861, that any incident occurred worth mentioning as connected with the affair.

Mrs. Wallop had become grayer, and the deep lines of sorrow were more prominent, it is true, for she had had no tidings of her absent son. Nellie, also, had become a regular "stay-at-home" girl.

She did not mingle with the other folks, or give life to the "apple-cuttings" and "weev-ly wheat" parties by her merry laugh as had been her custom in former days, and was scarcely seen away from home except at church, which she attended regularly.

She had arrived at that period of her life, to be sure, when, under ordinary circumstances, she would have rejoiced to mingle with the happy young people of her age, but a shadow had, in a measure, crossed her life and she felt more at ease when alone or with a few special friends. She was at church, however, the centre of attraction. Her round and well-formed face, slightly pallid cheeks, pure complexion, and well-cut features, shone with great beauty behind her brilliant orbs. She carried herself

with an ease, grace, and becoming modesty, which held the eyes of those who gazed at her like enchantment.

It was one of those blustery days, when the trees bend and the woods roar and the high March winds growl, the timber now and then breaking and sending to the ground below the long dead prongs and weakly limbs from the bodies giving them support.

Aaron Flint and his hired hand, Dick Spooner, were driving the two-horse wagon, *en route* to mill where a pair of burrs, forced around by a great wheel, fed by an "overshot" power, did duty in chewing the corn into meal for the denizens of the surrounding country. It was just as these two persons were passing up the road that led to Mr. Wallop's residence that the agonizing shriek of a female voice was heard in the vicinity of the house, and both looking in that direction discovered in a moment a volume of smoke issuing from the eaves of the roof.

"Mr. Wallop's house is on fire," said Dick, and instantly Mr. Flint gave his horses a cut with the whip, putting them to as much speed as he considered safe. They hurried to the west side of the building, and after dropping the traces and throwing the lines around a stake, both Mr. Flint and Dick speedily began removing the furniture from the building, which was too much wrapped in flames to be saved.

They both worked hard and fast, as is usual in such cases, and cleared the eastern part of the house first, where the fire was raging most. They next proceeded to Samuel's room and soon cleared it of its furniture, even saving the sash in the windows. This success encouraged an effort to save the casing itself, which was

prized off with an axe. Stuffed down against the bottom board, where it had been securely hidden from view, Mr. Flint drew forth a *reticule*, somewhat musty, made of blue calico. Turning to Dick, who was prizing at another window, he said: "This old rag seems to have been pretty well stored away," and by holding to the string it unfolded in front of him.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Dick, as his eye caught sight of Surrilda Pepper's lost reticule. "Put that in your pocket and let no one see it, as you value my friendship."

Mr. Flint doubled the article up and crowded it down into his pantaloons' pocket, while he likewise folded up the strings and shoved them in after.

"I don't like to keep this thing as it does not belong to me," said Mr. Flint, as he tossed out the remaining pieces of lumber.

"I will take charge of it, for it belongs to Mrs. Pepper," continued Dick, in a low but nervous tone. And a new and interesting idea took possession of Mr. Flint's mind. Having completed their efforts where they were, they proceeded to Mrs. Wallop, who was standing at some distance weeping over the destruction of her house. Nothing else could be saved, as the eastern portion of the house was falling in.

Mr. Wallop and his son now arrived from a distant part of the farm, from where they had discovered the fire after it had made considerable progress. They were excited, of course, but Dick thought it important to keep his eyes on Samuel's movements. He hurried to his own room, which was now full of smoke and the ceiling already crackling and burning furiously. He was apparently heedless of danger, and rushed into the burning room closely fol-

lowed by Dick, who stopped at the outside and near the window where the reticule had been found. Samuel merely glanced at the point where the window-casing had been removed, for he observed Dick near by, and passed to the southwest corner of the room and hastily inspected the floor at that point.

The smoke and heat were by this time suffocating and it drove him back to the window, where he hastily passed his hand near the spot from which the "reticule" had been taken, and sprang out the opening with a face full of apprehension and dread.

"We took everything out before you came," said Dick, addressing him.

"Yes," was his reply, as he walked some distance away to the fence, beyond the heat, and rested his elbow on a rail, his face pale and haggard, while his little brown eyes close together darted from the burning building to the two men, who by this time were standing together. Having saved his plunder from the ashes he presented a picture worthy of study.

Mr. Flint very kindly tendered to Mr. and Mrs. Wallop a portion of his own dwelling until they could prepare for themselves more comfortable and permanent quarters, and they accepted his offer, for it was the best they could do under the circumstances. Other neighbors had gathered to the scene and proffered assistance, and the usual amount of conjecture indulged in as to the origin of the fire. It was not until the woodwork had been reduced to ashes and the stack of stones and dry mortar left standing, that a satisfactory conclusion was reached; but it told its own story, for, at a point just above where the ceiling reached, a hole was made by a loose and displaced stone,

which had allowed the fire to escape to the wood. There is no time when a country neighborhood is more generous and kind than when one of their number has met with a misfortune like the one which had overtaken Mr. Wallop, and they volunteered at once to the task of loading the scattered furniture in Mr. Flint's wagon, for he had abandoned the idea of taking his trip to the mill at that time and had emptied his load of grain. As each article of furniture was placed in its proper position it met the scrutiny of Samuel, whose movements were still watched by Dick. There was evidently a feeling of great uneasiness on the part of Samuel when the task was over, for the reticule had not been seen by him; neither was it burned, and yet he knew it was not where it ought to be. These facts were weighty in his sagacious mind, and when he associated them with the presence of Dick on that occasion, and then Dick's conduct with other facts and circumstances which had previously occurred, he was in a disturbed and restless condition. Many men before him have experienced similar feelings—a kind of horror they can not shake off, a chilly uneasiness which freezes the blood and causes them to start at the slightest unusual sound.

With all his cunning and shrewdness, his insatiate love of money, which had bred dishonesty in his heart and on which he had feasted his highest aspirations, he now trembled at the presence of a neighbor boy. The "old reticule" was but an empty rag and contained nothing of value, yet he would have parted with a great deal to have known to a certainty that it had been consumed in the flames, unobserved.

A nervous twitching of the muscles and the absence of blood from his face were witnesses of a tortured or remorseful conscience. He did not go with his father and mother to Mr. Flint's, but took up his abode with Jerry Halter at the residence of Mrs. McSquint; a fact which, in connection with other events, added nothing to his already partially soiled reputation. It was late that afternoon before Mr. Flint got an appropriate opportunity to speak with Dick and dispose of the reticule; but while in the barn the two made a close inspection, and found the conclusive proof of its ownership, by detecting on the inside and near the top the name of Surrilda Pepper, the letters of which had been made by threads sewed into the cloth.

Dick did not tarry long at home after supper, but hurried over to Mr. Clayborn's, where the news of the burning of Mr. Wallop's house had preceded him. He did not spend much time with the family that evening, except with Nellie, whom he entertained with the startling developments of the day, and let her inspect with her own eyes the reticule, which pointed most certainly to Samuel Wallop as one of the thieves, at least, who had committed the crime, while it furnished more certainly and conclusively the evidence of the innocence of Theophilus.

Dick returned to Mr. Flint's and securely hid the last piece of evidence discovered and went about his work as usual, while Mr. Wallop lost no time in building another house on his farm; and again all the family were sheltered under the same roof.

Jerry Halter had remained pretty close at home during the winter, and did not converse

much with those he met ; whether it was at the suggestion of Samuel, or because of his difficulty with Joe Clayborn, can only be conjectured. Mrs. McSquint and Clarissy Cutright had become deadly enemies, growing out of the "talk" about Miss Clayborn ; and quite a number of rumors had been chased about the neighborhood, derogatory to Mr. Clayborn and family, always landing back to the fountain head, Jerry Halter, Charity giving them their finishing touches.

Not only were the fierce winds of March whistling through the woodland, but a great cloud of civil war was roaring in the distance and shadowing the homes of a free people.

An event far reaching in its consequences, and fraught with a trouble and sorrow greater than any which had before afflicted the American people. All minor events and sensations disappeared in the public mind, and all discussion ceased except that of the effect of the coming storm.

The departure of Theophilus Wallop from his home, the theft of the money, and all things else affecting the welfare or adversity of the people everywhere, was lost sight of amid the excitement of the approaching calamity. Every father's face was full of anxiety, every mother's eyes were filled with tears, and every home was one of sadness. It was a time when the country's statesmen had failed to guide the ship of state aright and the momentous question of the hour had to be settled by bloodshed. The nation must be plunged into war with all its fearful consequences, and soon the roar of the cannon, the bugle blasts, and stimulating clatter of the drum were heard.

The professional man came from his office, the mechanic from his shop, and the hard-fisted yeoman from his plough. Fathers gave up their sons, wives their husbands, and girls their sweethearts, to save our country from dissolution and ruin. The appeal of the authorities for troops, the voice of patriotic song, and that of the orator were read and heard from city hall, hamlet, and grove. The national emblem floated in the air, carried by thousands of hands, propelled by patriotic hearts, leading the mightiest army the world had ever seen to victory. Mingled with the music of war could be heard the sad wailing of mother, sister, and wife, as they bade farewell to father, son, and husband, who took up the line of march to suffering, fighting, and death. It was not the feeling of an hour or the excitement of a day, but a continuing commotion, a preparation for war, where young men in the health and strength of their manhood broke the ties of home and kindred and sacrificed themselves upon the altar of their country. It was a surprise to the men high in authority that so majestic an army could be raised in the workshops and broad fields without the aid of the coercive power of government. There was a lurking idea that most of the patriotism and chivalric bravery rested with men who were blessed or cursed with wealth or office. But it was early demonstrated that there was no lack of devotion to the country and its flag by those of lowly birth who had not reposed, during their lives, in the lap of luxury.

It was when the "Hon.— Jones" had delivered himself again of the finest effort of his life, in an eloquent description of our grand

and growing commonwealth, from the landing of the "Mayflower" to the firing on Fort Sumter, that a martial band commenced marching back and forth in a deep and shady grove near the Clayborn schoolhouse, now somewhat dilapidated, to the tune of "Bonaparte's Retreat," and Dick Spooner and Joe Clayborn enlisted as members of Company A of the — Regt. Indiana Volunteers.

A few days were set apart to them for preparation before they took their final departure, with thousands, for the field of battle.

"Well, Dick," said Joe, in a serious mood, for he was thinking of the sad final leave-taking of his family, "this is a serious enterprise we have embarked in."

"Yes, but somebody has to put down the rebellion, and we had as well get the glory of it as others," said he, smiling.

"Well, I volunteered because I felt it my duty, let the consequences be what they may."

"Well, I am in for fun, and think I will get back all right; but if a 'Johnnie' knocks my trotters out I have nobody to grieve for me, not even a girl."

"Yes, Dick, you have many friends who would be sorry if you should be killed."

"We will stick together, Joe, whatever happens."

Thus these young men talked as a thousand others did under similar circumstances. The two separated, each going his way, feeling that he had met, and was willing to perform, a patriot's duty.

It was a sad evening indeed, at the Clayborn home, when Joe broke the news that he and Dick Spooner had enlisted in the war. We

do not mean that there was a lack of patriotism on the part of anyone of the family, but it was the ordeal of surrendering a loved one to the dangers of cruel war.

“Joseph,” said his father in a tone of deep feeling, “my boy, it is hard to surrender you to the mercy of bullets, for I have no other son to assist and sustain me in my declining years; but I cannot claim that you are dearer to me than others are to their fathers, so you have as much of my consent as it is possible for a father to give, to go, and be sacrificed, perhaps, for the benefit of our country.”

“I am hopeful that I may return; but if I do not I will be but one of thousands to die in defense of the nation’s flag, and it would be an honorable death,” answered Joe.

Here the conversation terminated, for Nellie, who had heard the matter discussed, broke completely down on hearing the brave but tender words of her brother, and she threw her arms around his neck and wept like a child. Her life for more than a year past had been lonely and sad, and the thought that her only brother was going far away to the south, where she would perhaps never see him again unless he might be brought home dead with his body pierced with balls, was too much for her tender nature, and she had broken down under her feelings.

A manly tear dropped from his cheek as he gently removed the arms of his sister from about his neck and kissed her moist cheek.

It was the next afternoon when Dick came over, not neglecting to whistle as he neared the house. Nellie hurried to meet him, for he was next to her brother in her affections, but this

time her face was sorrowful, and she could not keep from crying when she met his gaze.

“I thought maybe you would shed tears over me, sometime,” he said, while his eyes fairly danced.

“I did not think, when we were joking about the matter, that it would terminate so seriously.”

“Nothing very serious in going to war, is there?” he replied.

“Do you not think there is great danger of your getting killed?”

“Oh, I don’t know; I am a good dodger, you see.”

“But you can’t dodge a bullet.”

“I would try mighty hard; besides, I am not so large, and there is lots of room for them to pass by.”

“Many poor fellows will be killed,” she continued, seriously.

“Yes, but they would die sometime if they remained at home.”

“That is true, but they would be among their friends which would be a great comfort.”

“Yes, those who have near friends,” he continued, with a tinge of regret that he had been left in the world without near kin.

“It may be a little different with you, Dick, but I am so sorry you and Joe must go, but I will pray for you when you are far away,” and her feelings overcame her and Dick abandoned the idea of cheering her with his odd and witty answers.

A long talk was had as to the best mode of disposing of the facts and circumstances in his possession which pointed to the innocence of Theophilus in the larceny. For in case he

should never return, he felt it a high duty to place in reach of Theophilus the facts which would prove his innocence if he ever returned for trial. They finally concluded it was best to intrust their secrets and evidences in the care and keeping of Mr. Flint and her father. Accordingly, Mr. Flint and Dick appeared early next morning at Mr. Clayborn's, and the three together had a long and earnest interview in the grove near by,

Dick related with great particularity the conversation he had overheard between Samuel Wallop and Jerry Halter, in regard to the will beneath the walnut tree, his efforts during the week, and of the mysterious night trip of Jerry, and his discoveries at the fallen oak.

He gave them the sticks with the measurements of the two footprints found at the trunk of the tree, and went into a minute detail of Mr. Latemeal's story, with his version of the horse with the three white feet passing each way on the night of the crime, which he supplemented with an exact measurement of the foot of "stockin' John."

He next proceeded to the discovery of the reticule at the burning of Mr. Wallop's house, and held it up to the inspection of Mr. Clayborn.

The facts as they were detailed by Dick were susceptible of but one construction as they presented themselves to the minds of the two listeners, and they promised to do the best they could in watching events in his absence. After Flint had taken possession of the articles shown them, Dick took his final leave of Mr. Clayborn, who manifested deep feeling at his departure, for he realized the young man's

great worth and true fidelity more this morning than ever before.

"I have read the story of 'Damon and Pythias,'" said Mr. Clayborn, after Dick had gone to bid auntie and Nellie good-bye, "but I was not expecting a repetition of it in my own time, and to see such a beautiful illustration of true friendship as has been shown by that noble young fellow toward Theophilus Wallop."

"I can now account for his absence from my house many times, which was before a mystery to me and at times annoyed me, but it is now as plain as day," said Mr. Flint. And the two men talked over the probable results of the war.

Auntie had impressed a kiss on Dick's fair brow at his leaving, saying, "Poor boy, he has no mother;" and Nellie followed him to the gate, for she feared it was the last time she would ever see his pleasant face and hear his gentle voice.

"Well, Nellie, I have told them all, and intrusted them with the measurements and reticule, and if I am never able to render Theophilus more assistance, I feel that I have done what I could in his behalf."

Nellie could make no answer, for she was choking with grief which had reached her heart from many sources. He held her hand in his some time, for he must go, and said:

"Good-bye, Nellie; remember I will write you often, if I can."

She did not let go his hand at once, but still holding it, she looked into his moistening eyes and tenderly kissed him; yes, kissed him; not with a lover's kiss, but because he was so

good and kind, and had no sister, or mother, or any one to love and caress him.

In the afternoon Joe took his leave, and it was one he never forgot. Such partings cannot be described in fitting language, and need not be; for every father and mother whose son became a soldier will remember the scene by the mere mention of it. The two young soldiers took their leave of Mr. Flint's family with the same good words spoken to the departing heroes all over the country; and on the day of—, 1861, they became a part of the army of the Stars and Stripes, and moved to the front. What they did and saw will appear further on

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was good news to Samuel Wallop and Jerry Halter, when they learned that Joe Clayborn and Dick Spooner had gone into the army, especially was this so as to Spooner thought Samuel, for without being able to give a reason, he had a constant feeling of uneasiness while that young man remained near him. It was not a permanent relief to his mind, however, for the absent reticule was somewhere, and in somebody's possession perhaps, where it was destined to turn up and torment him.

Matters which would not affect Halter in the least, would be brooded over by Samuel, and analyzed by his careful mind, and unpleasant deductions made therefrom. To him the lost reticule was a thing not to be ignored or lightly passed over, and it haunted him by day and by night. From the day that his father's house burned, he was discontented

and restless ; something had made a weight on his existence which he could not shake off. He became more reserved in his manner and conversation with the few people with whom he associated, and passed a great portion of his nights sleepless and nervous. He became cross and fretful, especially toward his mother, and in a few months lines on his little slim face indicated his inward trouble.

He passed the most of his time with his companion, for he seemed to feel safer when in his presence, while Halter had almost forgotten the ugly circumstances known to exist against him, and looked robust, manifesting the same audacity and boldness which had characterized him from youth. Had it been at a different period in the history of the country, the actions and conduct of these two young men would doubtless have been more closely scrutinized. but the continued and unabated excitement of the war, and the constant departure of the young men of the neighborhood, being uppermost in their minds, the matter that concerned them most was least thought of by their neighbors.

More than a year passed after the departure of Dick and young Clayborn to the war, still Samuel Wallop was not contented. He had not developed into muscular manhood, but was, if anything, reduced in flesh, and wore a haggard appearance, which with his notions of bloodshed was a sufficient excuse for his not enlisting in the army.

Anthony Wallop was becoming more enfeebled in health, and his rheumatism had more than once threatened his heart. He had always been so peculiar and reticent that his

wife could judge but little of his thoughts, and it was not until his severe sickness, that he mentioned the name of his absent son. It was late in October 1862, when Mr. Flint, the nearest neighbor, was called to sit up at night with him when he was suffering from one of his severe attacks of trouble in the region of his heart. These attacks were irregular, but when they came on were alarming. When they had passed away, however, he was almost free from pain, and could converse freely, if so disposed.

He had reached his sixty-seventh year, and had begun to realize that he was nearing the end of life. It was after the midnight hour, and his pain had ceased. Turning over he looked his neighbor in the face, and said :

“ This here pain in my breast, will take me off sometime.”

“ You are better now than during the fore part of the night,” said Mr. Flint, consolingly.

“ Yes, but it will come back in a few days, and they get wuss every time.”

“ Well, we have all got to go sometime, and you are getting old.”

“ Sixty-six past,” said Mr. Wallop.

“ You have had a good constitution?”

“ Yes, but it is nearly worn out now.”

“ Well, said Mr. Flint, if you should be called away, I reckon you have got your affairs arranged satisfactory to yourself.”

“ No, I don't know that I have, egg-zactly.”

“ Well, I suppose it is a hard matter to get everything as one would desire,” was the reply.

“ I have fixed my property, I guess, as well as I can, but I have had so much trouble with my boys.”

“Samuel has not given you much trouble, I suppose?”

“More’n you think for.”

“I knew you were troubled about your other son,” said Mr. Flint.

“I tried hard to give him such trainin’ as would do him good, but maybe I could a done better.”

“I suppose you have not heard from him?”

“No, he has never writ but one letter, and that to his mother.”

“Had he heard he had been charged with the crime when he wrote?”

“Yes, but he denied it, and writ such good words, hopin’ I would live to find out he didn’t do it, that I would like to live longer,” and he drew a long breath which was followed by a silence of some duration.

“Maybe you will live to know it yet,” said Mr. Flint, encouragingly.

“I don’t think I will be here long, and I never hear from him, and Samuel is so strange here of late, that I feel in my old age that my children are no comfort to me.”

“What seems to be the matter with Samuel?” inquired Mr. Flint.

“Grievin’ about the way his brother done, I think, for he has been actin’ quar every since he left.”

“I knew he did not look well,” answered Mr. Flint.

“No, he looks bad, and don’t sleep to do any good, and hollers and gabbles in his sleep so much.”

“The result of indigestion, perhaps?”

“Humph.”

“His stomach is out of order, I mean,” explained Mr. Flint,

“No—no—the ailin’ is here (pointing to his head), for he gets skeared at Dick Spooner, and hollers for Jerry till we go to him and wake him up, and Mrs. McSquint says he does that way at her house. I am afeared he won’t live long.”

“You must not worry too much over these matters, for it doubtless brings back your pains.”

“Maybe it does, but I can’t help it.”

Mr. Flint during the interview, between questions and answers, had been thinking to himself, and was at a loss to know just what to do, and what was the best thing to say to his neighbor under the circumstances. He was pleased to know that Mr. Wallop, beneath his rough nature, still entertained a father’s love for Theophilus, which he was not expecting to see manifested. He felt that he could give him assurances of the innocence of one son, but in so doing, if he gave his opinion fully, it would involve the guilt of the other. He therefore concluded that he would do what he could in a general way to put his mind more at ease as to Theophilus, without venturing an opinion as to the guilty parties.

“Mr. Wallop,” said he, “do you really think that Theophilus took Mrs. Pepper’s money?”

“Oh, I reckon he must a done it, but it was forenenst his trainin’.”

“I believe him to be as innocent of the crime as an angel,” said Mr. Flint, fastening his eyes on the sick man.

“What makes you think so?” said Mr. Wallop, his eyes brightening.

“I have reasons and some knowledge of

facts that convince me of it," was the answer.

"I hope that you may be right, and would like to know what you have learned."

"Not now, Mr. Wallop, I can't give you anything but my opinion, and you must be content with that and believe as I do if you can," and with these words he awoke Mrs. Wallop and left her husband in her care, and went home to secure a few hours of sleep.

Mr. Wallop was soon able to leave his room, and quietly go about his farm, but was far from being well. Samuel was passing his time with Jerry at Mrs. McSquint's where that lady had quietly but hopefully undertaken to restore his health, which she insisted had been "unpaired" by a "tordid" liver.

She accordingly proceeded to a restoration of that organ by appliances of various kinds of poultices, known only to her apothecaric mind. Samuel's malady did not readily yield to the skilful treatment of his physician, but Charity noticed quite an improvement, and was very hopeful of his final recovery, or at least that was what she said.

The drums continued to beat, the flags to wave, and the orators sent forth their eloquent appeals, while the press everywhere pleaded for, and urged young and healthy men into the war for the suppression of the rebellion, yet Jerry Halter could not see why his personal effort was necessary in the undertaking. It was true he was of strong build, unmarried (not his fault however), and at the proper age to do valiant service for his country; but he would have to leave his kind old god-mother without help and alone. There were

the cows to drive, "stockin'" John to chase in the field, the pigs to feed, and chickens to watch, and he was entirely too tender-hearted to leave this burden to Charity. He loved his country, it is true, but he loved himself, a good bed in which to sleep, and Charity's cooking, better. He did not go to the war, much to the approval of Charity, who declared it (the war) was the greatest piece of foolishness she ever heard of.

While this little family was thus agreed and happy, quite a different state of affairs existed at the home of her sister. From the first sound of the war trumpet, Reuben Pepper "had snuffed the battle from afar," and was frothing and panting for the blood of the traitor who had trampled his country's flag beneath his unhallowed feet.

He lost all interest in the construction of the globe on which he rested his weary feet, and the causes which led to the "unpleasantness" were the burden of his song from day to day. He was ordinarily a man of peace, and had the utmost respect for the feelings and muscle of his fellow-men. But when an ungrateful subject rebelled against the government, which threw its protecting arm around him like a warm blanket in January, he became desperate, and it required the combined efforts of Surrilda and little Bob, on more occasions than one, to keep the excited husband and father from rushing to the front with his "Yauger" and annihilating the South. When these spasms of irresistible patriotism took possession of the determined, but short and stumpy hero, he would go through the manual of arms, "right shoulder

shift arms," "order arms," "take aim," "fire," and snap his flint on the "pan" of his musket, pointed at an imaginary foe in the distance.

He would then assume the soldierly attitude taken at the command of "parade-rest," and remind Surrilda of how much service the government was losing by reason of his having to stay at home with her and the children, while the flag of his country was endangered. The question of his volunteering with the next recruiting officer who came along, was one of constant discussion on his part. Many times he left the house with the avowed purpose of joining the army if death overtook him the next day. He would get as far as the top rail of the fence, where he would break down with the horrible thought that his mangled remains might be brought home to his orphan children, or that his bones might bleach beneath the rays of a southern sun.

He would sit a long while and ponder over the grave questions, and return to the house, as Surrilda expected. She had great confidence in her husband, and it was that which caused her to remain quiet and serene while he was threatening to go to war, and leave her and the dear children to mourn his absence. Even Reuben's neighbors, notwithstanding his patriotic nature and spasmodic impulses, joined in his wife's opinion, that if the cruel rebellion was not crushed until he rushed madly forth to its suppression, then indeed would we have a long-continued struggle. Reuben did not take himself to battle, and many others did likewise, who reasoned after the style and fashion of Mr. Pepper.

But thousands of others, more reckless than he, had enlisted and had gone down in battle, leaving wives and children to mourn them. Of all the states which suffered from the war, there was none that had a severer test than old Virginia, the native state of Mr. Clayborn. The few relatives he had in the world, outside of his immediate family, lived there, and his heart went out in sympathy for his kindred who were between the fires of the two great armies. He was thinking of his wife's widowed sister, and the misfortunes which must overtake her, as he leaned against the door of the village post-office, while the officer was calling out the names of parties to whom letters were addressed.

"Johnathan Clayborn," said he, as he handed an envelope to him, addressed in a neatly written hand.

He tore open the envelope and read the letter which was from a niece, Miss Charlene Rivers, a daughter of the sister of his deceased wife, of whom he had been thinking. The letter bore the sad intelligence of the death of her mother, with a great many details of the suffering caused by the war, closing with the request to temporarily make her home with him, in case she could make her way through the line of the Union army. Mr. Clayborn folded the letter and started for home, feeling sorry to hear of the death of his sister-in-law, but not that her daughter wished to come to him for help, and escape the dangers which threatened those helpless ones at the front. He was more than willing to have her come, for it would not only be a pleasure to aid the orphan girl, but his own

daughter needed a companion to cheer her drooping spirits which were telling on her young life. He would submit the matter to his sister and Nellie, however, but he did not doubt that Charlene would be a welcome visitor, for though he and his sister had not seen her since her early childhood, yet he knew that her parents were of a good family, and possessed kindly dispositions which they must have left as an inheritance to their daughter.

“What news, father?” said Nellie, on meeting her father, and her face grew a shade paler, for she lived in constant dread, as many others did, of the intelligence through the mail.

“Nothing from Joe, but here is a letter from your cousin.”

“Let me see it; I can’t think who it is from,” and she read it through, becoming serious as she read of the death of her aunt, whose face she did not remember to have seen; but she was delighted to know that her cousin wished to come to them, and said:

“We will have her come, won’t we, father?”

“Just as you and your aunt say.”

“Then I will go and see auntie,” and she ran into the house, where she again read the letter, and all agreed to write to Charlene at once to come as soon as she liked. The letter was written that evening by Nellie’s own hand, and was ready for the mail next morning. It was late when she went to sleep that night, but she was lighter hearted than she had been for months before. She had received letters regularly, almost once a week, from Joe, and occasionally one from Dick, bringing the good news that each had escaped disease and

death. Joe's letters always breathed words of kindness and hope for his safe return, while Dick's were full of queer and witty points, never failing to bring a smile to Nellie's face.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was on the 22d day of May, 1863, I believe, after the battles of Champion Hill and Black River bridge had been fought on the east and in the rear of Vicksburg, when the troops were resting about on the hills, that some matters occurred in connection with our little history which ought to be mentioned. The dead and wounded had been buried and cared for, and the "boys" who had done a great deal of hard fighting and marching through mud and swamps and over hills and cliffs a few days preceding, were now allowed to recruit their strength, for a regular siege of the city was contemplated. Besieging a place is nothing more than camping around it so closely that the enemy cannot escape. You must keep your eye on him it is true, for as he becomes lean and lank from hunger, his tendency to leap the barriers in front, or steal out at night becomes strong, and the utmost vigilance is required. It is a matter of considerable comfort to a besieging army to realize that its enemy is cooped up with every avenue of escape cut off and weakening each day for want of food. The occasion was not monotonous, for the front lines of both armies, when not practicing marksmanship at each other from rifle pits, were exchanging articles of food, rough jokes, and opinions, while the officers were

busy planning to blow each other up with powder.

It was a great army that formed a strong line extending miles around the city, which feasted on the "strong" diet of Uncle Sam, with dessert from the surrounding country, while those in the coop were gradually sharpening their appetites for the choice "porter house" cuts of the confederate mule. It is a grand but strange sight to view an army in camp, covering the hills and valleys far and near. Some are grouped together in squads of fours, amusing themselves with variously pictured two-by-four papers, while others are spinning yarns between puffs from their briar-wood pipes. Others are bending over the three gallon camp kettle, hurriedly stirring the burning rice, while yet others are writing letters to friends and loved ones at home.

There are some who drift around lonely by themselves, in deep reflection, while far more obtain their needed rest by sleep, not on downy pillows, but the soft side of boards, the dry leaves, the wet grass or mother earth. It was late in the evening when Corporal Dick Spooner returned from relieving the sentinel on duty in the rear of the division. He was in his usual good humor, for the service had not broken his hardy constitution as it had some others, and was wondering what the young people were doing back in "Hoosier," when he observed a comrade of an adjoining company, far out from his quarter, doubled up like the half moon, sleeping on some rough timber, with a little red lizzard now and then passing over his haversack near by.

"Hello there, partner," said Dick. "Why

don't you go to your 'Chebang' and take a decent snooze?"

The tired fellow opened his eyes a little and taking a very weak look at Dick relapsed into forgetfulness, but Dick knew he would be more comfortable in his quarters, and determined that he would fully arouse him, gave him a considerable shake and exclaimed:

"Say, friend, you will warp if you don't straighten out, I would not be found dead all curled up that way."

"No, I spect not, but if you had been tramping without sleep, as I did last night, you wouldn't interrupt a fellow," said he, wiping his eyes with his knuckles.

"Where have you been," asked Dick.

"Way out in the hills, hunting buttermilk. I got tired of 'hardtack' and 'skippers' and thought I would have a change."

"Well, how did you succeed?"

"I did not get the milk, but I got a piece of goat and et it, and I just wanted to climb hills, fences, and narrow planks all night till I wore myself out and laid down here."

"You must have eaten a whole goat?"

"No, but I don't think I will want any more for some time."

"Well, let us go to our regiment," said Dick.

"Oh, I just thought of it, did you see that officer who was looking for you?" said the comrade.

"What officer?"

"I did not learn his name, but a captain of some Iowa regiment was asking about you and the company you belonged to, and said he was coming to see you this evening."

“That is strange, for I do not know any officer outside of our regiment,” said Dick, as they strolled along.

They were just passing the headquarters of their colonel when they observed a strange, tall, well-built man in conversation with the adjutant, who observing the two soldiers passing near by remarked :

“There goes Corporal Spooner now.” The strange captain at once started in the direction of the two men, but as it was getting a little dark, Dick was unable to see his features until he came within a few feet of him.

“Mr. Spooner, I think I will have to put you under arrest,” said the captain, in a voice evidently assumed.

“For what?” said Dick quickly.

“Because you have forgotten an old acquaintance so easily,” was the reply, in a tone that utterly surprised Dick.

“I certainly ought to recognize your voice,” giving the officer as close a look as the light would admit.

“Yes, if we were back in Indiana you would know me.”

“G-e-e-Whiz-e. Is your name Wallop?”

“It certainly is,” said Captain Theophilus Wallop as the two friends grasped each other by the hand, and continued to shake till the soldier standing by concluded that the ceremony was to be protracted too late for his comfort, so he left.

“I was afraid we would never meet again, Theophilus,” said Dick, who in his great joy and surprise had forgotten that his school-mate was now wearing the uniform of his rank.

"I have been reconnoitring for you some time," was the reply.

"How did you learn where I was?"

"I learned of your enlistment through your uncle in Iowa, who had a letter from someone in Indiana, and I kept trace of your regiment until I accidentally met the comrade who was here a moment ago."

"Well, I never was so agreeably surprised in my life."

"Yes, Dick, and this meeting is one that I have been wishing for ever since I thought it possible that we might see each other."

"We will now go to our tent and astonish Joe."

"Joe?"

"Yes, Joe Clayborn is in my company."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the captain who suddenly stopped and turned facing Dick.

"Yes, and he will be the best pleased fellow around Vicksburg to see you."

"Are you sure of it?" said Theophilus hesitating.

"Indeed I am, Captain."

"I had rather you would call me Theophilus, for it sounds more natural, but you know, Dick, I have been resting under a cloud, and suppose my old friends have lost confidence in me."

"You stand as high to-night in the estimation of Joe Clayborn as you ever did in your life, and as to the cloud you speak of, I give you my word there has been a great change in your favor in public sentiment, which I will fully explain to you later. I can give you some information which will have a tendency

at least to put your mind at rest, and now let us go at once."

They soon arrived at the tent, where they did astonish Joe who was indeed surprised, but delighted to see his old friend. The greeting was warm and a long and pleasant conversation followed. It was a warm, still, quiet night and after agreeing to remain till morning, Dick proposed a little walk with Theophilus alone, which Joe tacitly understood to have some reference to the charges which had been made against him, and remained in his "bunk."

The two young men walked some distance and seated themselves upon a log beyond the hearing of anyone and entered into a long conversation. Theophilus gave his friend a complete history of the causes which led him to leave home, and what occurred the day he left, except the occurrences at Mr. Clayborn's. He followed this with his trip and stop over at Mr. Pepper's, and continued his narrative of what occurred at Mr. Grewel's, his trip up the Missouri River and into Iowa, where he made his home till he became a soldier at the first call for three years' troops. He had been elected by his company as first lieutenant when it was mustered into the service, and promoted to captain at Paduka, Kentucky. His regiment had joined the forces of General Grant at Fort Donelson and he had been under him since. His story was one of continued hardships, the winter preceding having been severe on the troops; but his greatest anguish had been caused by the charges made against him among the acquaintances of his early life. He declared his innocence in

strong terms, a matter, however, not necessary to convince his friend. Dick, in turn, gave him a history of his efforts in his behalf, the overheard conversations between Samuel and Halter, and every other fact in connection with the affair which had come to his knowledge. Theophilus listened to the story with nervous gratitude, and several times shook his friend's hand and thanked him for his kindness. There were two circumstances Dick had purposely omitted, for they did not belong to the main thread of his story. One was the part Nellie had taken in the matter, the other what Joe had done in vindicating her good name. He had reserved these facts for a climax.

"I told you I had acted the detective in the matter," said Dick.

"Yes, Dick, and I can never repay you for your disinterested kindness."

"You do not owe it all to me," was the answer.

"Why so?"

"Because someone assisted me."

"Who else has been my friend in this trouble, pray?"

"You have had more than one."

"Who are they, and how did they assist you?"

"I am afraid you might blush here in the dark," said Dick.

"There are no ladies present and I am not so timid as I used to be," answered Theophilus.

"Sure you will not go to writing poetry?"

"I guess not, I never was guilty of anything of the kind."

"Then Miss Nellie Clayborn was my only adviser in your case."

"Thank heaven she did not believe me guilty."

"She has seen the evidences of your innocence."

"Dick, you make me think this world is worth living in after all."

"Of course it is, I don't want to leave it at any rate."

"Ah, my good fellow, I have wished a thousand times to see you, for it has seemed that in all my trouble you could give me good news, and now my feeling has been verified."

"I always try to keep a package of that kind of goods with me."

"What else, Dick, tell me all?"

"Joe did you some service that did you good as well as another at least."

"In what way?"

"He 'licked' Jerry Halter till Mrs. McSquint did not know him."

"For what?"

"For charging Nellie with having a knowledge of your committing the crime, and being connected with it in some way."

"Dick, you don't mean it do you?"

"Well, if you had seen Halter when I got to them, you would thought Joe meant it."

"It was a noble act in Joe, don't you think?"

"Of course, and if it were not for some people in this world, I would like to have him for a brother-in-law."

"What do you mean by some people?"

"That she is dead in love with your big ugly self."

"What makes you think so?"

"I am a detective, and while fishing for

other facts in your case I discovered that one."

"But she never expects to see me again."

"I do not know as to that, but I have seen her bright eyes dance with joy as the evidences of your innocence came gradually to light, and I have seen her face sadden while the gossips were heaping epithets upon you."

Theophilus could no longer keep his seat but rose and marched back and forth like one greatly excited. The great shadow which had hovered about him was disappearing, he was overjoyed and turning to his friend said:

"Dick, you have taught me a lesson of true friendship which will last me during my life."

"I have done nothing for you but what you would have done for me had I been situated as you have been."

"That is the highest compliment you could pay me," was the answer.

"Well, the work is not completed yet, for the guilty parties must be made known to the public by proof, before you will be entirely vindicated."

"Certainly, but I am sorry that my brother seems to be connected with the matter."

"Yes," said Dick, "that is an unpleasant feature to you, but it is of his own choosing."

"His greed for money has been his ruin, I am afraid; but it seems so strange that this crime should have been committed the night of my departure from home."

"It just happened so, I think, for I was never able to find that either your brother or Halter had any knowledge that you were

going to leave, or that you intended to stop with Mr. Pepper."

"They could not have known it for I did not myself," was the reply.

"Then the larceny was committed for the money alone, and they seized the circumstances surrounding you as a shield for themselves."

"I suppose so," said Theophilus.

"If we both live, I feel sure the whole matter will be explained," continued Dick.

"I hope so, but it pains me to learn that my mother has grieved so much about me."

"She has defended you against the charge on all occasions, and her words and actions have done much to push me forward in the matter. But your father's declining health has caused her additional sorrow."

"Father has always been of a strong constitution, and I was not aware, till you told me, that his illness was so serious."

"From what Mr. Flint has written me, I think he is very low and not likely to live long."

"What is the nature of his sickness?" inquired Theophilus.

"It is disease of the heart, to which is added his trouble about you and your brother, for Samuel it seems is not in good health, or at least despondent," was the answer.

"Does my father yet believe me guilty?"

"I think he does."

"Has he had any information that Samuel and Halter were the guilty parties?"

"I think not."

"Then, Dick, it would be far better, and cause him less pain and trouble, to withhold,

for the present at least, the knowledge of the circumstances existing against them."

"It can do no harm to leave him in ignorance of that matter, and might aggravate his illness," answered Dick.

"I think I ought to write my father at once, and relieve his mind all I can as to myself, what do you say?"

"Yes, for you may never see him again, and you would always regret it if he should die believing you guilty, when you might have disabused his mind on the subject."

"I will write him the first thing in the morning;" and with this remark both men gazed eastward and discovered the first rays of the morning appearing. They went back to the tent and laid down on a blanket where Dick was soon sound asleep. It was different with the young captain, for the story given him by his friend had filled him with a new hope which drove all efforts at sleep away. He lay with his eyes wide open, and went over in his mind the story given him and analyzed it in all its bearing.

Had it not been for the intelligence of his father's serious illness, he would have been in a state of absolute ecstasy, but this fact rendered him uneasy, for in his heart there dwelt a son's affection for a parent, and he desired that parent might live to be fully convinced of his innocence. He quietly got up from the hard ground on which he was lying, while the morning sun was creeping over the eastern hills, and taking Dick's writing material from his knapsack, wrote his father the following letter:

“VICKSBURG, MISS., May 23, 1863.

“DEAR FATHER:—I have just learned of your bad health, which I fear is in a measure increased by sorrow occasioned by charges against me of the commission of a crime at the time I left home.

“This cruel and false charge has made my existence miserable for almost three years, but thanks to a kind providence and faithful friends, unmistakable evidences of my innocence are in the possession of honest men who will produce them in court at the proper time. To be more specific, I am assured that the *horse which carried the thief* to and from Mr. Pepper’s house the night of the crime is well known, and the reticule which contained the money has been found, in the possession of others, with Mrs. Pepper’s name upon it. These articles will be produced with a chain of circumstances which will conclusively show that others, not I, are the guilty parties. If the Great Father above shall spare my life till I receive an honorable discharge from my country’s service, I will come at once and meet this charge, and successfully and truthfully prove myself not guilty. You may not be living when this occurs and I implore you to have faith in my honesty, and not go to the grave believing me a thief.

“In conclusion, I call upon the Savior of men to witness the truth of my innocence and pray that you may believe me.

“Tell mother that I think of her kindness to me in day time and dream of her at night, and that I pray the good angels to keep watch over her in her many troubles.

“Your affectionate son,

“THEOPHILUS WALLOP.”

Joe awoke as Theophilus was finishing his letter, a soldier's breakfast was prepared and the three former schoolmates and fast friends enjoyed the meal and each other's company till the middle of the forenoon, when Theophilus mailed his letter and took his departure for his own command. Other letters were written to different parties by the three comrades, and they continued to visit each other till the surrender of the city in July following.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHARLENE RIVERS had arrived at Mr. Clayborn's. She was a lovely girl, somewhat taller than Nellie, with brown eyes and hair, a round, plump face, and complexion white as the lily, with rose-tinted cheeks. Her form was slender and symmetrical, while her voice was soft and musical. She was not gay and sprightly at this time, for her recent sorrow, occasioned by the loss of a kind mother, and her own departure from the friends of her childhood, gave her somewhat the appearance of a newly-transplanted flower.

Her hands were not jeweled, and she wore the dress of a neatly-attired country girl. Nellie had decorated each of the two large rooms, prior to her arrival, with flowers reared by her own hands in the little garden south of the house. The day after her arrival was lovely indeed. It was the latter part of May, when Nature was just putting on her garb of beauty, and the fragrance of the tender rose was wafted on the gentle breeze. The bees were humming and darting from blossom to blossom while the two cousins were walking among the

sweet clover looking for stems with four leaves, when Miss Rivers glanced over the green fields, and remarked :

“ What a lovely country home you have here, Miss Clayborn.”

“ Yes, it is very nice ; but you must call me Nellie, for we are to be sisters.”

“ That will be nice, for I have been so lonesome of late.”

“ We all feel lonely and sad because of this dreadful war,” answered Nellie.

“ It is much worse among the people of the South, for they are in the midst of it,” said Charlene, sadly.

“ That is true ; but my only brother is a soldier and I feel anxious on his part.”

“ Certainly, but I do not think the South can hold out much longer, for they are certainly in the wrong and should not have begun the struggle ; besides, they are not entirely united, while you people are.”

“ Are there many union people where you lived ?”

“ O yes, a great many ; but they are compelled to keep quiet or leave, and many are forced into the army against their wills.”

“ Poor men, they are to be pitied.”

“ Do your soldiers ever come home ?”

“ Joseph has never been home since he enlisted.”

“ You get letters from him, I suppose ?”

“ Yes, quite often, and I must write to him to-day and tell him of my new sister, for I know he will be glad that I have someone to keep me company while I am waiting his return.”

“ May I help you, Nellie, and write some in your letter ?”

“Yes, and he will be so glad to know you, even by letter.”

The two had retraced their steps, and were seated at the little stand table, writing their joint letter, when Mr. Flint rode down near the house and asked if Mr. Clayborn was at home. Nellie told him that her father was in the field, and proposed to go after him, but Mr. Flint suggested that as he was in a hurry he would ride to the field, and started in a “lope.” Soon Mr. Clayborn came to the house with the announcement that Mr. Wallop was not expected to live through the day and desired to see him. He caught his horse and in company with Mr. Flint went over to Mr. Wallop’s residence, while the two girls completed their letter.

Mr. Wallop, after the burning of his former dwelling, had built a somewhat rudely constructed house of two rooms and a summer kitchen, for he never was a man that believed in laying out large sums of money in fine buildings. There was a stillness and quiet about the premises which causes a solemn feeling to possess one, as the two neighbors approached and fastened their horses.

On entering the sick-room, Mr. Clayborn saw and shook hands with Brother Thornbush, Mrs. McSquint, Samuel, Halter, and Mrs. Wallop, who were situated miscellaneously about the room.

“Good morning, Mr. Wallop,” said Mr. Clayborn, stooping down over his sick neighbor and taking him by the hand.

“I ’m mighty bad, Clayborn, and this here misery (pointing to his breast) is takin’ me off.”

“He has pil-lusery pains, I think,” chimed in Mrs. McSquint. “Don’t disturb the cawdled cabbage leaves I have put on his left ribs.”

“No, no,” said the weak man, “it is my heart.”

“I am sorry to know you are suffering so,” said Mr. Clayborn, not noticing the remark of Charity.

“I sent over for you, Clayborn, because I wanted you to read to me a letter I got from my boy this mornin’, because my old woman can’t read good, and maybe you can tell what’s best to do.”

Mrs. Wallop, with eyes bedimmed with tears, handed Mr. Clayborn the letter written by Theophilus from Vicksburg a few days before.

Mr. Clayborn read the letter in a clear, strong voice, and emphasized those points which referred to the proofs of the young man’s innocence. It was the first time he had seen the letter, and his voice was a little tremulous as he read the few last pathetic sentences. He laid it on the bed, and looking into the face of his dying neighbor, said:

“Mr. Wallop, that is the kind of letter I would be pleased to receive if my boy had been placed in the situation yours has.”

“The letter *reads* well enough,” said Brother Thornbush.

“I don’t believe everything that is writ out well,” said Charity.

“You don’t know everything about the matter either,” interposed Mr. Flint, who, for the first time, had taken his eyes off of Samuel and Halter’s pale faces.

“Well, well, I *do hope* he can prove himself clar, but I don’t go much on letters, I

don't," said Charity, as she placed her hand firmly on her face, while her foot marked time at a double-quick speed.

"I want to be alone with Clayborn a bit," said Mr. Wallop, while the beads of perspiration besprinkled his pale brow. The parties all got up to leave the room, but it was evident that Brother Thornbush and Charity were not exactly satisfied with the request, for Charity admonished Mr. Clayborn not to interfere with the cabbage leaf, for Mr. Wallop knew it was the only thing that gave him relief. She was alarmed for fear something might happen in her absence, so she whispered to Mrs. Wallop at least twice before she could leave. Brother Thornbush bent tenderly over Mr. Wallop and advised him not to talk too much, for he was weak and any excitement might hurry him into eternity. The room was finally cleared, and Mr. Clayborn sat fanning the dying man, who was resting with a view to a few words with his neighbor as to his absent son.

"It's most three years since I seed that boy that writ me that good letter," said Mr. Wallop, faintly.

"Yes, I know he has been gone about that long," said Mr. Clayborn.

"I have been thinkin' that maybe you could tell me sumpin that would help me in my trouble about whether Theophilus stole Mrs. Pepper's money, an' when I got that letter I got Flint to go for you."

"If I can do you any good in the matter, or relieve your mind, I will be really glad to do so," said Mr. Clayborn, kindly.

"You have hearn that I made a will cuttin' the boy off, I reckon?"

“Yes, I have heard so.”

“Well, if he’s not guilty I want to change the will, for he was a good boy as anybody’s, and I am not feelin’ satisfied eggs-zackly.”

“Do you wish my candid opinion as to the boy’s guilt?”

“Yes, Clayborn, and all you know about it, for I don’t believe you will say nothin’ that isn’t right.”

“I certainly could not be guilty of deceiving one in your condition about a matter of such importance to you; and I say to you, as a disinterested man, that I am fully satisfied of the innocence of Theophilus. My opinion is not based on this good letter of his alone, but on facts which have come to my knowledge, which I am not now at liberty to give in detail.”

“Can’t you tell me something more’n that?”

“I can say,” said Mr. Clayborn, after a moment’s reflection, “that I have seen the reticule with Mrs. Pepper’s name on it in which the money was placed at the time it was stolen, and it was found since the larceny where Theophilus could not have put it.”

“That’s what he talks of in the letter,” said Mr. Wallop.

“Yes, but I did not know that your son knew of the fact till I read his letter.”

“Thank you, Clayborn, thank you; for I have not done the boy justice these three years; for I thought he was the thief when the old woman stuck to it that he was not.”

“She has certainly been right and you have been in error,” said Mr. Clayborn.

“Poor boy! I used to flog him purty hard when he was growin’ up, and he was like his

mammy. It hurt his feelin's so bad. I could a done better in trainin' him."

"I never inquired the reasons for his leaving home," said Mr. Clayborn.

"Well, his mammy used to beg me not to whip the boy and said it made him want to go 'way; but my daddy had teached me that way, and Brother Thornbush often said if I did not use the rod he would come to ruin; but I think I could a done better."

"Yes, we are all likely to make mistakes, and perhaps you was a little too strict with him," was Mr. Clayborn's reply.

"If I could jest live to see him I could die better; but the time is near for me to go, and I want you to tell the boy, if you ever see him, that his daddy loved him and believed him honest and not guilty of the crime. Do that for me, Clayborn, and the boy will thank you, as well as his daddy, for he is tender-hearted, and I know he wants to know I feel that way."

Mr. Clayborn nodded assent to the request, and the eyes of both were dim with tears. Mr. Wallop rested a moment, and then resumed:

"I want to change my will, so that the boy will get his share of my estate, and when that is done I feel that I may go to rest."

"You can do that by making a new will," replied Mr. Clayborn.

"Yes, but I want Theophilus to know that I tore the old one up."

"Where is the will?" asked Mr. Clayborn.

"Brother Thornbush has it."

"Then I would call him," said Clayborn, noticing that Mr. Wallop breathed faster.

"Yes, have it done quick." Mr. Clayborn

at once motioned the minister to come to him from near the front gate where he was standing.

“Mr. Wallop desires to speak to you,” said Mr. Clayborn, which remark being heard by the sick man, he said :

“Brother Thornbush, I want to tear up that will I made, and make another, will you get it for me?”

“Certainly, Brother Wallop, I will do anything you desire in the matter, but are you sure you had not better have some advice from your best friends about it before you make a serious change in your worldly affairs?”

“I want to change the will, and my time is too short to argy the thing again,” said the weak man.

“Very well, Brother Wallop, if you are determined in the matter I must bring you the will,” so saying he left the house for his own home some three quarters of a mile distant. He had scarcely got out of sight, when Mr. Clayborn beckoned those present to the bedside, for he had noticed a sudden change in Mr. Wallop’s condition. A heavy, cold sweat had overspread the haggard face, the lips were closed, and the half-open eyes had assumed a glassy appearance. A slight twitching of the muscles of the bony face and one long gasp for the breath that sustains life on this earth, and Anthony Wallop was dead.

There was deep grief on the part of the stricken wife, for though Mrs. Wallop was several years younger than her husband, she had been his companion for a quarter of a century and long since got used to his odd notions.

To her he had manifested many good qualities not known to the outside world.

Mrs. McSquint, on learning that death had actually occurred, became hysterical with appearance of grief, whether from her sympathetic nature or from force of habit, no one can tell. Brother Thornbush returned in due time with the will, but alas! too late, for the testator was dead. He carefully kept the document in his pocket, and after placing his hand on the dead man's forehead, in a tone of great seriousness, said to Charity:

“Sister, an all-wise Providence shapes our ends better than we know how to do.”

“Yes, yes,” answered Mrs. McSquint, not knowing how Brother Thornbush intended to apply his remark, “when Hiram was took off with the janders I reckon it was intended that he should go that way.”

“You do not understand me, sister, I mean that there has been a special providence in this case.”

“O yes, I always use them when I can't get the roots and yearbs I want,” said Charity, referring to the cabbage leaf she had wilted and placed on Mr. Wallop's side in the morning.

“My dear sister,” said the minister, with an effort at composure, “I am not speaking of tangible medicines and appliances with which we heal the sick, nor of earthly agencies, but of that invisible hand and power which often comes without our bidding, and steps between this earthly tabernacle with its weakness and folly and its grave and serious errors.”

“Umph-umph,” answered Charity, with but a very slight idea of his meaning.

“To be entirely plain, I had gone to get

the will, at the request of the deceased, in which he had disinherited his ungrateful son who had stolen your sister's money, for the purpose no doubt to destroy it and make one in its stead by which the wayward young man would have been restored to a share in his father's property and to his former family relations, but a wise Providence has removed him before he could commit the error."

"Surely it was foreordained," said Charity, in a whisper, for others were coming into the room.

Brother Thornbush, having thus delivered himself, in company with Mrs. McSquint proceeded to the duty of condoling with Mrs. Wallop, and left the corpse to be taken care of by Mr. Clayborn and Mr. Flint.

Mr. Clayborn was indeed sorry that Mr. Wallop had died so suddenly, for he knew that it was a good and pure motive which prompted the dying man to desire to set his son right, both as to his estate and his good name. He resolved in his own mind, however, that if he ever saw Theophilus he would repeat to him his father's dying words; and though he felt that the young man was cut off from his just inheritance, yet would he love and respect his father for his good words and intention to restore him as a member of his family.

The funeral and interment were to occur on the following afternoon, and Charity appointed herself mistress of ceremonies, as well as chief mourner. All persons were instructed to go on tiptoe and the conversation to be conducted in a whisper. Samuel and Jerry did not come about the house much, but there were many indications of sorrow depicted in their faces.

Brother Thornbush had early gone to his home to prepare his sermon as a tribute to the memory of the dead. He selected the subject of "Special Providences" as a theme, and stored his brain with illustrations and pathetic ideas for the occasion, for he had a few months before lost his good wife by death, leaving him, and a grown-up son and daughter, to mourn her loss.

The people came from quite a distance to attend the funeral; and when the hour for the sermon arrived, and after Charity had led off and sung "A charge to keep I have," in a tone so high that even the wart on her nose turned scarlet, the good man entered upon his discourse.

He spoke of the deceased's early life, his removal to Indiana, and his accumulation of worldly goods, not forgetting his religious duties. He went into detail in his description of the over-shadowing trouble which Theophilus had given him by leaving his home and committing a black and evil deed. He next spoke of the young reprobate's last hypocritical effort to obtain, by a nicely-worded letter, a portion of his father's earnings which he had forfeited by crime. He here gave Charity a significant look to which she nodded her approbation.

He reached his peroration by a feeling description of Mrs. Wallop's great sorrow, and illustrated her bereavement by his own sad loss of a companion. Poor Mrs. McSquint! This last reference was too much for her heaving bosom. She gave a long, despairing shriek, and fell to the floor, where she uttered in a broken voice the words "Hiram! Hiram! dear Hiram!" until the sound of her voice

was lost in its own weakness. Of course she excited pity, and the minister lifted her quivering form tenderly to a chair, where he attempted to leave it sitting, but it required several efforts; for every time he removed his hands from about her shoulders the trembling body would topple over like a doll.

Charity's emotions, like the turbulent waters, reached a calm, however, and after a few additional formal ceremonies, the body of Anthony Wallop was taken to the green field and buried beneath the long branches of a large elm tree, where it rests at this time.

CHAPTER XIX.

It would prolong our story too much, if we were to follow the fortunes and troubles of our hero and his two fellow soldiers in detail during the entire period of their enlistment. Joe and Dick were constantly together, but the command to which Theophilus belonged, often took him hundreds of miles away from them, and it was only when there was a concentration of troops at threatened points that they were together. They could and did communicate by letter, not only with each other, but with their friends in the North.

Theophilus had learned of the death of his father through a letter from Mr. Clayborn with the details of his words and actions during his last hour on earth, when he had become convinced of his son's innocence, but not in time to change the will and restore him to his inheritance. The two facts coming together made his heart heavy, but beneath the sad intelligence he felt in a measure re-

lieved because his father had not gone to his grave believing him a criminal.

Theophilus was not avaricious, but the money he received as pay from his government he was saving for a start in the world, should he ever return to civil life. He felt keenly the mortification of being disinherited, much more so now than when he first learned of the fact, because a new hope had dawned upon his existence, besides, there was his good old mother left alone in the world. For her he felt a great anxiety, for like all young men who are blest in early life with that tender care always bestowed upon them by a mother, the fond recollection of her kind words and acts was always present to cheer and inspire him. He was anxious to be freed from the disgraceful charge which had so long been a smothering weight to his existence.

More than one earnest letter had been written by him to Nellie, to which he had received answers assuring him of her sincere belief in his innocence. Her fidelity and faith in him under all the circumstances, and his knowledge of it, gave him new vigor and filled him with a longing desire to again mingle with the friends at home.

He was sitting alone at his quarters at Kingston, Georgia, long after "tattoo" had been sounded, wrapped in his own meditations, where all was still and quiet with the moon shining in upon him from the east. He was busy with his own reflections, for the command was not apprehensive of danger, it being after the city of Atlanta had been taken by General Sherman. He had received his mail, bringing him a tender letter from his

mother, as well as another which made his manly heart throb with love and pride. His surroundings were peculiar, and he was reflecting to himself as to what the future might have in store for him.

There was his mother left a widow with no one to comfort her at home, for his brother was of so cold and cruel a nature as to bring darkness and not sunshine to her troubled life. He, himself, stood charged with a crime which had brought shame and disgrace upon her, and at present it was impossible for him to emerge from it, and the chances for him to survive the war were extremely doubtful. While thus sadly thinking and speculating as to his future, he felt a kind of uneasy sensation creeping over him as he sat on his lonely stool. Many a poor fellow has experienced it—not a feeling of fear or cowardice, but one that something serious is going to happen, a kind of warning of approaching danger. He was trying to remove the melancholy feeling and look to a time when there would be no war, when he would be a free and happy citizen and an honored soldier and the possessor of when the long roll, the signal of danger, broke in upon his meditations like the piercing thunder, while the bugle's signal to arms echoed against the hill, bringing every officer from his quarters and every soldier from his "bunk." The order "To Altoona at once" was passed from officers to men and soon the regiment was in line. A long train of box and flat cars was soon heavily loaded with soldiers, and within the next two hours it had landed its burden at its destination. The remainder of the night was spent in dig-

ging rifle-pits and preparing for the next day's battle, for the Confederate General Hood had the little garrison almost surrounded.

While the regiment to which Captain Wallop belonged was hurrying to Altoona, the command to which Joe and Dick were attached was camped at a point called Ettowa Bridge, only three miles north of the place. It formed a part of the army which had been left in the rear of Atlanta to guard the railroad leading back to Chattanooga.

Dick was fond of scouting and had reduced the art of foraging to a science. He took great delight in bringing about a change of diet from beans and rice to chicken, cured ham, or sweet potatoes, the scarcity of which made them the more palatable. He would often get a permit and climb the high hills and mountains to exchange a pint of government coffee with a lone citizen for a canteen full of fresh buttermilk. On the day preceding, and in the afternoon of the day of the attack on Altoona, which occurred in the first week of October, 1864, Corporal Spooner was ordered to take a squad of six men with a team and go some miles south of the camp and secure a load of corn and such other articles of food for man and beast as he might be able to find in the country. He struck out with his little command, of which Joe made one of the number, and had gone some five miles in a southwesterly direction. They had partially loaded their wagon, when Dick discovered some very fresh signs of a recent camp, where it was evident a considerable force had stopped over night. He was at a loss to understand what troops could have

been quartered there, for at that time no Union soldiers were stationed away from the railroad. He was not long in doubt, however, for on glancing in the direction of his own camp he saw coming toward him a company of cavalry, dressed in the Confederate uniform and only about a hundred yards away. He ordered his men to fire at them, and at once a half-dozen shots echoed against the eastern hill which had the effect to check the advancing company. It was momentary only, for in a short space of time the whole company deployed and prepared to make a charge on the little party. It was the first time in Dick's experience as a soldier when he was called on by reason of his superior rank as an officer, to take charge as commander-in-chief of the field. He was not a West Point graduate, and not versed in the best tactics to follow when suddenly attacked by superior forces. He had, however, read enough to know that it is sometimes wiser to retreat than to make a vigorous stand, and as the thick undergrowth of timber at the foot of the hill was but a short distance, he gave the command to "double-quick march," and at the head of his entire force dashed across the open space leading to the hill on the east at a speed commendable for so young and inexperienced an officer. The team, of course, was left to the enemy, and the flying bullets from the Confederate carbines made anything but pleasant music to the fleeing forces of Corporal Spooner. The hill was reached in safety to his entire command, where the heavy undergrowth obscured them from the view of their pursuers. They reloaded their guns, gave another small

volley and parting salute to the enemy, and struck out again over the steep hill to the east. No very serious effort seemed to have been made for their capture, but Dick knew that it would be hazardous to reach his own camp by a direct route, and determined to go to the railroad at Altoona and thence north to the bridge. It was after dark when they found their way to the outer picket line of the forces of General Corse, at Altoona, where they were happy to be admitted inside their own lines.

"Halt," said an officer, wearing a red scarf, addressing the squad after they had come inside the Federal lines, at which the small force stopped suddenly and presented arms to the officer.

"Where do you belong?" asked the officer, sternly.

"Ettowa Bridge," answered Dick.

"What are you doing here?" was the next question.

"Trying to get back to our regiment."

"Where have you been?"

"I was ordered by my colonel to take a team and go down in the country for forage," answered Dick.

"Where is the team?"

"The Jonnies have it," answered Corporal Spooner.

"How is that, explain yourself," said the officer. "I am in a hurry."

Dick gave him the details of his experience in a few words, when the officer again asked:

"Corporal, how many rebels were there?"

"I did not count them, Captain, for we left in a hurry, but judge there must have been more than a hundred."

“You will, perhaps, have a better opportunity to ascertain their number in the next twenty-four hours,” said the officer abruptly, as he turned to an officer and directed him to take the squad to the colonel of the ——— Minnesota regiment and report them to him for duty.

In a little while the command of Corporal Spooner was merged in that of the Minnesota troops, where it was furnished, not with a warm evening supper, but with forty rounds of ammunition, picks and spades with which to dig pits to shelter them from the enemy's bullets when they should be attacked at dawn of day. Dear reader, it is not the most pleasant recreation in the world to spend the hours allotted to sleep and quiet dreams in gouging down through green roots and gravel into the earth to make a hole deep enough to protect your body from the missiles of death hurled at you from the enemy's gun, yet when an attack is sure, and if you are not braver than a majority of the men who took up arms in defense of their country, you had much rather undergo the labor than to risk yourself as a fair target on *terra firma*. Till late in the after part of the night, did Corporal Spooner and Joe Clayborn toil side by side in digging their pit of safety, and finally crouched down in the dirt and clay, but slept only a short hour, when they awoke at the roar of the booming cannon, the first signal of the coming battle. They were unfortunately situated on the first rise of the hill where they must be first attacked to reach the little fort. The struggle was begun with musketry in front, with scattering shots like the big drops

of rain that precedes the storm, then came a lull and terrible silence, during which the sun came forth in resplendent glory and shone sadly on the tops of the distant hills. Suddenly a dark cloud closed down over the earth and Nature's brow knit as she frowned her disapproval of the tragedy of war.

Again the battle opened with great vigor on the south and at the foot of the hill.

It was a determined assault to capture the fort on the top of the elevated ground, but the rifle-pits were held by the Union forces with great bravery. Two hours of desperate fighting and bravery on the part of the Confederates brought them up to the main line of defense, and a charge of desperation brought the two contending forces together, and with superior numbers General Hood secured the first line of rifle-pits with quite a number of prisoners. It was in the great effort then made to repulse the advancing foe, that Joe Clayborn rose from his place of temporary safety to reload his empty gun, and in quick succession received two painful wounds, one in the arm near the shoulder, the other in his leg below the knee, shattering the bone. Poor Joe! he fell back in the pit faint and weak. Dick hurriedly wrapped his handkerchief around the bleeding leg, but before he had time to stop the blood from the arm, the enemy had passed over the entrenched line and the two companions found themselves prisoners of war. Joe was hurriedly taken back into the dense forest where he was laid behind the trunk of a tree, beyond the reach of the bullets from his friends, which were making the woods and timber ring with their fearful

music. Dick was taken to his wounded comrade by two Confederate soldiers to whom he had surrendered when Joe received his wounds.

He stooped over his comrade and hastily whispered to him :

“ I’ll come to your aid soon, if possible,” but no sooner was his stooping noticed by his guards, than one of them turning his gun on him with fixed bayonet exclaimed :

“ Look here, Yank, if you don’t want this run through you, you had better hump it to the rear.”

“ You can’t be in any greater hurry than I am to get away from here,” said Dick, as he took up his line of march in front of his captors.

He was marched some distance and halted among quite a number of prisoners, who like himself had been captured in the last fierce charge. Here he remained until late at night hungry, weak, and distressed, more on account of his wounded companion than himself. Had it not been for his anxiety about Joe, Dick would probably have taken his imprisonment and capture philosophically, and been better contented to walk in front of a loaded gun as the others did ; but from the moment his companion fell bleeding at his feet, he determined to escape if possible. It was not till after dark, that the Confederate commander gave up in despair his effort to subdue the little garrison, when he pulled away his army and started in a southwesterly direction leaving the brave and heroic General John M. Corse with his gallant little command still holding the fort. It was indeed a forlorn and sorrowful procession which Dick Spooner joined,

weak and exhausted, when at the hour of ten o'clock at night, he with the other prisoners was ordered in line by a heavy guard. He felt but little inclined to march, and had already made up his mind to take a great risk rather than be a prisoner. The troops first followed a well-beaten road, with now and then a piece of woods and thicket on either side. He guessed they had marched some three or four miles, and he was so weak and tired that nothing but his hope of escape buoyed him on. He noticed his immediate escort was much worn out from the day's fatigue, and was carrying his gun swung across his shoulder with the muzzle downward. The bushes were but a few feet from the road, and he darted into them like a scared rabbit and ran for dear life in a northerly direction. Two blunt musket reports rang out on the night air, in his rear, but instead of checking him they only made him go the faster till he reached a comparatively safe place to hide.

Here he stopped to get his breath and wipe the blood from his face which he had scratched in coming in contact with the brush through which he had run. He waited some little time till the noise of the retreating army grew faint in the distance. Once he caught himself dropping to sleep, but the thought of his wounded companion aroused him and he started north, taking the moon for a guide. Everything was still and the excitement of his escape, and the hope that he might relieve Joe, gave him strength to push forward believing he might reach the railroad at a point north of Altoona. After nearly an hour's travel through brush and woods, he was much sur-

prised to recognize the spot where the evening before he and his little squad came so near being captured. He well knew the road from this point to his own regiment and determined to go to it, if he found that it still occupied the place where he left it. He was very cautious and listened carefully to learn that he was not among the enemy, and finally reached his own camp which had not been molested by the Confederates.

It did not take him long to wake his captain and secure a detail of four men of his own company to go in search of his wounded companion. He filled his haversack with crackers and salt pork which he devoured as the party made their way back to Altoona, and down into the forest, where poor Joe was suffering great pain, especially from the wound in his leg.

“Joe,” said Dick, “here is some water,” and he placed the mouth of his canteen to the feverish lips of his wounded comrade.

“Dick, is it you?” said Joe, as he held out the hand of his well arm.

“It is nobody else, and the Jonnies are gone, I escorted them out a few miles, but have come back to you as I promised, and these are some of the boys of our company who came with me to help you back to camp where we can take better care of you, and we are now going to put you on this litter as easily as possible.” They took him to the barracks where his leg was splinted and bandaged and his wound in the arm dressed, which happily proved to be a flesh wound merely.

When this had been done Dick dropped down exhausted and was soon sound asleep,

where he was allowed to remain till late in the morning, while the comrades did all in their power to relieve the suffering of their comrade.

Captain Wallop had no idea that his two bosom friends were near the little garrison at Altoona, and Joe and Dick were equally ignorant that Theophilus was taking part in the long to be remembered little battle. Theophilus with his regiment had been placed on the west, while Dick and Joe had been put with the forces on the south. The battle had raged all the day with great fury, but Theophilus was nearer the fort than his two friends, and the fighting grew fiercer as the Confederates closed in closely around the barracks. Many times during the day did the enemy charge the little garrison, but with numbers greatly inferior to the Confederates the Federal troops stubbornly contested every inch of ground. Their commander was brave and fearless, and though wounded in the face he urged his men to hold the fort or die in the ditches. It was late in the afternoon when General Hood made one last and terrific assault with his combined forces on three sides of the place to bring it to a surrender. A most hideous yell rent the air, the roar of cannon was deafening, while the enemy's muskets sent forth a storm of bullets. It was now a deadly and awful struggle at close range, and the men on either side were falling like the leaves of autumn. The color bearer of Captain Wallop's company with many others was killed, and the national flag went down amid the victorious shout of the attacking party in front; but Theophilus seized the shattered

staff of the national colors, waved the emblem high in the air, and spoke words of encouragement to his followers. Yet the battle raged with great fury and men were falling on every hand. The cannons belched forth their messengers of death sweeping the patriots off into eternity. A volley of musketry, like a thousand blasts touched off at once, was fired as a last effort by the Confederates, as they came from the woods and underbrush near by, with deadly effect. Captain Wallop turned deathly pale, reeled and fell heavily into the ditch, for a minie-ball had passed through his body.

Soon the shades of darkness overspread the bloody scene. The battle was ended and General Hood defeated, leaving most of his dead and wounded on the field.

There is no more horrible sight for the gaze of mortal than that of a battlefield soon after the conflict is ended.

The earth is ploughed up, the underbrush cut and torn, while the large timber is splintered and furrowed by the ferocious cannon ball.

There is an anxious and careworn look upon the faces of the living which inspires one with a feeling of awful solemnity, while the groans of the dying chill the blood and pierce the heart with sorrow.

The bloody and ghastly dead scattered over the ground amid the timber, present a sickening scene too horrible for description. Poor wounded soldier! How he languishes in his own blood begging for water, when there is none to help him. How cruel to suffer and die with no tender hand or word to give relief

or comfort in his last hour, but such is the result of bloody strife.

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER Anthony Wallop had been laid away in the quiet grave, and after the good neighbors had dispersed, and even the bereaved widow had surrendered her dead to mother earth, Charity lingered about the mound of red clay which covered the remains moaning, and refused to be comforted until Brother Thornbush took her by the arm and led her back across the green fields to the late residence. She leaned upon the good man's arm with that heavy, heart-broken pressure which indicated her absolute need of someone to support her. Several times, as the twain moved slowly along, she gently squeezed his hand and kept her heaving bosom near where he carried his "London runner" watch. Of course the minister felt sorry for the nervous and trembling form which now moved so slowly and leisurely by his side, and did what he could to make her feel that he was doing his duty to soothe the sorrow of one of his flock.

"I always try, in my humble and feeble manner," said Brother Thornbush, "to speak in my discourses in such a way as to bring balm and consolation to the afflicted and heart-stricken mortals under my charge."

"You do use the most techin' words and lusterations in your sarments I ever hearn in my life," said Charity, as she nestled a little closer to her escort.

"Sister, do you really become infatuated with the power of my eloquence?"

“Yes, I believe I would get *fat* if I was not so lonesome,” said Charity, tenderly.

“Yes,” said he, “you, like myself, have been taught the lessons of sore and deep affliction, in the loss of a companion.”

“Yes, yes, but it is nigh onto *nine year* since Hiram was took off.”

“I know it has been quite a while since he crossed the great river.”

“No, no, Brother Thornbush, he was talkin’ about goin’ to the Elinoise, but I was afeared for him to cross the Warbash, for he couldn’t swim, so he died with the janders without goin’.”

“I meant the river of death,” said the minister.

“Oh, I thought you meant the Warbash river; but I have been so teched up by your preachin’ that I am afeared I’ve lost my understandin’.”

“No, no, you are just a little excited and nervous on account of the solemn occasion through which you have emerged.”

“Dear, dear,” said the widow, griping his arm again. “Can’t you run over and see me some day, and eat dinner with me and Jerry, for I do love to have someone to talk to.”

“Certainly, dear sister, I will be most happy to come at any time you may desire.”

“Then I will look for you next Sabbath,” she said, as she lifted her little gray eyes to his, and put on as broad a smile as was possible not to expose two elongated front teeth, which ordinarily performed the office of holding her underlip in its proper place. They had now arrived at the house, and the minister, after giving Mrs. Wallop a few consoling

words, left for his home, feeling that his powers and ability were not unappreciated. Charity had in a comparatively short time been restored to a feeling of composure, and after arranging the furniture for Mrs. Wallop, mounted her horse and went to her home, convinced that some comfort at least might be obtained at a funeral.

Charity had looked to the coming event, when Brother Thornbush would dine with her, with mingled emotions of hope and pride.

She always took pride in her ability to prepare a first-class meal, especially when she did her best, and on this occasion she felt that much depended upon her success. It was Sabbath morning, and she and Jerry were busy in preparing the necessary fuel and articles for dinner. She had allowed Jerry, much against her custom, to split up a dry fence-rail for kindling; he had also killed the hen which had refused to set, the big top-knot, for Charity knew her guest's fondness for dumplings, and determined to astonish him in that regard. She had carefully preserved a quantity of dried pumpkin, and the butter she had made from the same fruit she imagined was hard to excel. Her "Sogham" molasses, as she called it, though a little dark, was well-flavored.

It was a little late in the season, but she had heard someone in the neighborhood say that the minister was particularly fond of "greens" boiled with "jole," and with the vinegar she had put up for her own use she intended to serve a dish of the cooked vegetable which would give him a high opinion of her cooking ability. It is true this did not embrace the different courses to be served, for there were

the "flitters and sassafras tea," to which was added both butter and sugar made by her own hand. Jerry could not help but notice that a change of some kind had come over Mrs. McSquint, for she was now as playful as a child and chattered like a flutter mill. She had been to the village during the week, and supplied herself with articles of personal attire very unusual for her economic habits. She had purchased a pair of cloth gaiter shoes, balmoral stockings, a new pink calico frock, a gingham apron, and "Shaker" bonnet. Dressed in all these, except the bonnet, she was skipping about the house as though she was twenty instead of fifty-five years of age. She had several times stopped in front of the mirror and inspected herself, but was evidently not satisfied with her head-gear, and set to work on her clay-brown, tangled locks with a very coarse-toothed comb. She finally succeeded in getting the comb to pass through it without pain or labor. It did not lie down on her head as closely as she expected, however, and she was compelled to resort to a saucer of fresh lard before she could get it to remain as she desired, but she became satisfied and rolled it up in a knot on the back of her head and securely fastened it with her long tucking comb.

Brother Thornbush arrived in due time, just as the greens and pot of hot dumplings were smoking upon the kitchen table. His coming was heralded by his peculiar habit of blowing his nose, which made a sound similar to that of a wet dinner-horn. He wore a black lustre coat, high standing collar, white linen pantaloons, and plug hat, which had done service for him (or someone else) for lo! these many

years. Charity was looking her very best, for she had brought two small red spots to the surface of her swarthy cheeks by stooping over the fire in preparing the dinner.

Jerry met the minister and gave him a seat in the front room, where Charity soon came with both hands extended and head bobbing up and down like a goose in an effort to catch the large drops of rain in its mouth. She playfully chucked the good man under the chin, shook his long drooping hands, much after the fashion a mother would a child.

“You did come, Ja-hew,” said the smiling widow, assuming that familiarity characteristic of her when addressing very near friends.

“Yes, punctuality I regard as a virtue; and rigid compliance with obligations always inspires confidence,” said the minister, with the air of one who soared in his thoughts much higher than the common herd.

“So few people have um,” said the widow, feeling her inability to wrestle with the long sentence.

“External appearances indicate that you are enjoying rich blessings in the way of being free from bodily afflictions,” said he, as a complacent smile stole quietly out of one corner of his mouth.

“I feel better here (pointing to where she supposed her liver was located), but my affections are as bad *larserated* as ever,” she replied, determined to show her guest that she too possessed the power of language. “How is your children, poor things, since they have no mammy?” continued Charity, in a tone of absolute pity.

“Physically, they are robust,” was his significant answer.

“Good-ness-alive! How did it happen, Jahew?” exclaimed Charity, thinking some calamity had happened to the two orphans.

“I mean that their general health has not been in any way impaired,” he answered, instructively.

“Y-a-s, I now see your meanin’. My larnin’ don’t come to me good to-day, somehow,” said the widow, feeling that any attempt to keep in sight of her guest would be useless, and she hurried back to her boiling hen just as it had begun to burn, for of all things in the world she did not want to give the minister, it was a burnt dumpling. She, in a flutter of excitement, dashed a gourd of water into the boiling pot, which not only cooled the contents, but enough went over the sides to put out a portion of the fire, and to send up little clouds of smoke and ashes as well.

The meal was placed upon the table, a long blessing invoked, which was interspersed with inaudible ejaculations from the hostess, and then followed a variety of apologies for not having this and that, while she was piling the good man’s plate full of greens, jole, chicken dumplings, and such other substantials as she thought most palatable to the taste of her distinguished guest. Jerry was, of course, for the time neglected, but had time to note the rapidity with which the “goodies” were disappearing, for in all Brother Thornbush’s trouble he had not lost his appetite. The pious man finished his meal with a “sasser” of pumpkin butter, as the widow termed it, on which he poured a cup of sassafras tea, Samuel came

soon after the meal, when he and Jerry took a walk to the fields as was their custom, leaving Brother Thornbush reading the Bible, and Charity singing "Shew pity, Lord, O Lord, forgive," while she washed and dried the dishes.

"It is not polite," thought the minister, "to eat and run," and he amused himself by turning the leaves of the Bible until the widow should get through with the dishes.

Charity had cleared the table and arranged the pots in their proper places, and had taken one more look at her dear self in the piece of broken mirror in the kitchen, and entered the front room just as the good man was inspecting a piece of sandy hair, platted, with a yarn string tied around each end, formerly the property of Hiram McSquint. The sight of this little memento of her departed husband was always the occasion for a flood of tears, and noticing it in the minister's hand, she dropped in a chair by the good man's side, and locking her hands and placing them over his shoulder next to her, she wept on his arm while she moved both their bodies in a solemn rock to and fro. He replaced the innocent cause of the widow's distress between the leaves of the book, and was going to speak words of consolation to the distressed woman, when she looked him in the face, and said :

"Ja-hew, how did you enjoy the greens we had for dinner?"

"It was most excellent, magnificent, I might say," said he, after a moment's hesitation, caused by the sudden change of feeling on the part of his questioner.

"Hiram used to say that I was the best

woman to cook and patch briches he ever seed, poor feller."

"My deceased companion was a good woman in many respects, but she was not acquainted with the culinary art," responded the minister reflectively.

"I never seed this Mrs. Art you speak of, but I dare say she couldn't muster up a better bilt dinner than I can," said Charity, fastening her little gray eyes on him inquiringly.

"No, I don't think you have a superior in that line. Surely you was a great comfort to your husband."

"He hadn't a comfort to his name when I married him, but he never knowed what it was to want anything he didn't get afterwards," she said, in a tone of utter hopelessness.

"You must not feel down-hearted over the past, where you have discharged your duty, Sister McSquint," said he, consolingly.

"I orton to, I know, for I have a good piece of land with the taxes all paid and no mortgage on it, with stock enough to keep me goin' as long as I live, with no one to keer fur me but Jerry; but of course that's not like a comp-anion, and again the poor woman rested her face between her hands, and a long silence followed. During this little interval Brother Thornbush was thinking over his past life, the mention of the unincumbered land with plenty of stock, were not luxuries he had enjoyed through life, neither had his home been furnished with the delicacies and comforts suitable to a man of his ability and standing in the world. There was also a vision flitting through the feverish brain of Mrs. McSquint. She was looking to a period in her existence when the

long summer days and winter nights might be more comfortable to her; when she should be blest with a second Hiram, on whose bosom she might nestle in day and on whose arm she might sleep at night.

To be the minister's wife was certainly an honor, but to ride behind him to church and be invited to visit all the members and lead in the singing, was the "quintessence" of bliss itself, in her mind.

Like two turtle-doves the devoted pair passed the hazy afternoon tenderly in each other's embrace; and as the sun was sinking in the west, and the old "brindle" cow was coming home to be milked, with Sam and Jerry in the background, Charity, with one sunburnt arm around the high standing collar, and the hand of the other clasped over his bull's-eye watch, promised to be his devoted wife, and that to occur in a few short weeks. This little matter settled, the happy pair repaired to the kitchen, where the skeleton of the dinner hen was picked afresh, and they sopped molasses from the same "sasser," and he kissed her, and called her "Charity dear," and left her happy and serene.

Of course, when the good man had taken his final leave, Mrs. McSquint told the news of her engagement to Jerry. He was not delighted, but remonstrated in language only used by the irreverent; for he well knew that the accession of the minister as a member of the family would not enhance the comfort of himself and companion, for the latter had abandoned his mother since the death of his father. But it was no use to object, for Charity was determined and plainly told him that the minister was going to become the head of the fam-

ily, and if that did not suit him he would have to seek another home. Thus was Jerry silenced, and on the following morning she hurried away to Surrilda, to break the glad tidings to her. Surrilda was not happy on learning that her only sister was going to get married, for she had nursed a hope that she and Reuben would yet enjoy, unmolested, the earthly goods left at Charity's death, or at least, her own dear children would fall heir to them, rather than a stranger. She did not congratulate Charity, but instead, wept on her own apron. Reuben sighed as only one can who witnesses with his own eyes the property of his wife's relations slipping into the hands of others. After a stormy interview between the sisters, Charity returned to her home, feeling more than ever the need of a companion to support and comfort her in her declining years.

Brother Thornbush, with heaving bosom, had hurried home to impart to his daughter Rachel, now seventeen years old, and his son Timothy, who had passed his nineteenth birthday, the glad intelligence that their motherless days would soon be over, and that a new mother, in the person of Charity McSquint, was to reign in the family.

Instead of the news being balm to their orphan souls, it fell on their ears like a thunder-bolt from a clear sky. Rachel rose to her feet, her face full of indignation and anger, and in a fit of passion declared that if "old Chat" McSquint, as she had been nicknamed, ever set her foot in her house as her stepmother, she, the daughter, would leave home forever. The pious man tried in vain to reconcile his son and daughter, first by entreaty, but finally by

threats of punishment ; yet the children would not agree to accept their new step-mother on friendly terms. Finally the minister concluded to practice his own preaching, and seizing his daughter by the arm, was in the act of inflicting a blow on her cheek with his open hand, when Timothy, forgetting his training, his namesake, and everything but his sister and his contemplated step-mother, laid hold of his father and crowded him out of the door. A struggle followed, and father and son engaged in a downright fisticuff, which ended in the old gentleman being knocked out in the fourth round. During the difficulty, the daughter secured a few extra garments, and made her way to Mr. Flint's, where by accident or appointment she met Jim Logan, to whom she was already engaged to be married. On the following day they proceeded to New Albany, Indiana, where a justice of the peace joined her and her lover together in marriage, and they made their home in the city.

After the difficulty, Timothy left his home at once, and during the next week he enlisted in the 10th Indiana cavalry and served in the war to its close. He then came back and visited his sister for a short time, then went to the state of Kansas, where he has since resided.

Brother Thornbush was greatly chagrined and humiliated at the unexpected conduct of his disobedient children, for not only had he been somewhat bruised and scratched about the face, but there had been open rebellion against his parental authority. His own children, whom he had taken so much pains to teach the benefits of discipline, and whom he had so often pointed out as examples of his training, had

openly defied his authority, for no better reason than that he was seeking to furnish them with a mother to take the place of the one in the grave.

He passed a sleepless night in determining how best to bring back the wayward youth, but finally concluded to let them go, and "cleave unto Charity." Many times did he quote from Solomon, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Of course he gave Charity the details of his troubles and difficulties, and she in turn told him how Jerry and Surrilda disapproved the marriage, and the passion of love already awakened in their mature bosoms burned afresh.

It was when the November winds were stripping the brown and frost-bitten leaves from the great oak tree, when the tobacco had been cut and scaffold, the bean-pods grown yellow on the vine, the potatoes dug and buried along with the cabbage in the garden, the cockle burs and Spanish needles ripening, and when the bleat of the lonely sheep could be heard in the distant brier field, that Jehew Thornbush took unto himself a second wife in the person of Charity McSquint.

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. WALLOP, after the death of her husband, continued to reside at her home on her farm (Samuel's as it was now generally understood to be, subject to her interest as the widow). She had received letters regularly from Theophilus and her sad face showed signs of hope of his return. Samuel had taken charge of the stock and removed a por-

tion of it to Mrs. McSquint's. On more than one occasion she tried to get him to read the letters she had received from Theophilus, but to her entreaties he only responded with oaths and epithets, so that between Samuel and his mother there was but little said, but like a good mother she was anxious because of his failing health.

In his last letter Theophilus had said that he would return to her as soon as he was discharged from the army. This letter had made her weary heart glad, for outside of this promise she felt there was but little for her to live for. It is true that Nellie Clayborn and Miss Rivers had visited her on several occasions, and at each visit had done much to cheer her drooping spirits. Mr. Flint and Mr. Clayborn had each tendered her a home with them which she had declined, preferring to live alone and encompass her sorrow in her own bosom unobserved by others. She had been waiting and watching for a letter from her "dear soldier boy" for some days, with that anxiety characteristic of every true mother. She never failed on going to bed at night and rising from her pillow in the morning to pray for the safety and return of her absent boy. She had done her morning's work and had taken her accustomed place at the gate next to the road leading to the village post-office watching for the return of Mr. Clayborn who had gone to get the mail. She saw him coming in the distance, his gait was hurried and her heart fluttered with hope.

"You have a letter for me," she said, seeing a yellow envelope in his hand.

"No, Mrs. Wallop," he said in a broken

voice, "it is a telegram containing some bad news. Theophilus has been wounded in battle."

"Read it to me," she exclaimed, while her frame shook and her face became pale.

Mr. Clayborn hurriedly tore the envelope open and read to the despairing mother the following telegram, already familiar to himself:

"CARTERSBURG, GA., Oct.—, 1864.

"MRS. ANTHONY WALLOP :—Your son, Captain Theophilus Wallop, was seriously if not mortally wounded last night at Altoona, will send him north to hospital if he lives, if he dies will send the body home.

"J. C. DILL, 1st. Lieut.,

"Capt. Wallop's Co.,—Iowa, Regt.

Mrs. Wallop did not faint, but she dropped to the earth and between her sobs, with her wrinkled face to the ground, she fervently prayed that her son might be spared. She pleaded in the most piteous tones to the God she had never failed to worship, to preserve her life and that of her poor wounded boy till she should behold him again in life as she had done in years gone by. Mr. Clayborn was much affected, but he lifted the agonized form from the ground and seated her in a chair near the house. Mr. Flint and his good wife who had heard the news soon came over, and Mr. Clayborn started slowly homeward, but had gotten but a short distance when a messenger hailed him from the rear. On looking back he saw a boy coming with an additional dispatch, which on his arrival he handed Mr. Clayborn. It read :

“Joe wounded at Altoona yesterday in leg and arm, not dangerous.

“DICK.”

Again Mr. Clayborn started homeward with large drops of perspiration standing on his troubled brow. Nellie and Charlene were watching at the front gate. It was not necessary to read the dispatch to convince Nellie that her father had received bad news, for she read the fact in his troubled face and exclaimed:

“What is the matter father? Is brother sick or hurt?”

“Yes, but slightly wounded I hope,” was his labored reply.

Nellie seized the envelope, and with eyes already moistened with tears she read Dick's dispatch, and clinching it in her hand, she wept as if her heart would break.

“Do not cry, Nellie,” said her cousin, “he is not dangerously wounded the telegram says.”

“Oh,” answered Nellie, “I fear he is worse injured than appears from the dispatch, for Dick always makes serious matters appear as light as possible.” Again she buried her face in her hands and wept afresh.

Mr. Clayborn had walked into the house and for some little time had engaged in a low conversation with his sister, his face still wearing a troubled expression. This Nellie observed and leading, she and her cousin went to them.

“Father,” said Nellie, “you look so troubled, are you afraid brother is killed?”

“No, dear, I think the dispatch gives the

true condition, but I have further news, and if you will be a brave little girl I will tell you."

"What is it, father? I will do my best," she said, as she grasped her cousin's hand for support.

"Theophilus is also seriously wounded," he said, as he looked compassionately down into her pleading eyes.

She dropped her gaze to the floor, a rigor seized and shook her little frame, the blood left her face, and a sigh of unutterable anguish escaped her fluttering bosom. No word was uttered by her but a look of agony and despair caused the tears to stream from Charlene's eyes, and she put her arms around the pale and motionless form, and together they walked to their room. Charlene placed her, colorless and tearless, in a chair by the window. The news of Joe's wound had awakened her sympathetic heart, and she pitied him and relieved her feelings in a measure by shedding tears, but if Theophilus was mortally wounded, it would be the end of her hopes and expectations, the climax to an unfortunate and fated existence. The news came with such a sudden and awful shock to her tender nature, and so crushed her feelings that tears were impossible. She could but moan and sigh. She arose from her seat and clasped her little white arms around the neck of her cousin, and in a dry husky voice asked her to tell her father to come to her. This Charlene did, and Mr. Clayborn came and looked sorrowfully upon the distressed face.

"Father," gasped Nellie, "tell me where and how you got the news."

"A telegram was this morning sent to Mrs.

Wallop by a lieutenant of the company to which Theophilus belonged," was the answer.

"Can you give the language of it?" said Nellie trembling.

"Yes, dear, but you must not be excited, for there is hope as long as there is life," he said encouragingly.

"Tell me the worst," she murmured faintly.

"He is seriously, if not mortally wounded, but you must remember that many who seem fatally injured by gun shot recover finally."

"May heaven bless him," she said, with quivering lips, and threw herself on the bed and tried in vain to cry.

The father left the two girls to themselves, and all the day and night following did Charlene use her utmost skill to comfort the desolate girl. Nellie could neither eat nor sleep and passed her sad moments in walking the floor and wringing her hands. The third day brought a letter from Dick, in which he described the battle, his own capture, and the improved condition of Joe. He closed his letter with the statement that he and his wounded companion would in a few hours start to Louisville, Kentucky, where Joe was to be placed in the hospital. As both their times had expired he would not return to the service. Charlene read the letter and was disappointed that no mention was made of Theophilus. Nellie for the moment rejoiced at the improved condition of her brother, but again relapsed into her nervous and tearless mood. Another day passed, and darkness came but not sleep to the eyes of Nellie till nearly dawn of day, when an uneasy sleep overtook her. Charlene watched by the stricken girl ready

to smooth her feverish brow, as she would occasionally start quickly, then relapse to sleep. Long did she watch the sleeping girl till her own eyes became heavy, and she, too, was lost in slumber.

It was long after the breakfast hour when Charlene awoke, pleased to find that her companion was yet calmly sleeping. She quietly arose from the bed and moved cautiously about the room and noticed that the haggard and careworn look had in a measure disappeared from Nellie's face. She was in the act of going to an adjoining room when her companion awoke and hurriedly glanced about the room as though she was not certain where she was.

"Nellie, you have had such a nice sleep."

"Yes, and I only wish I could have remained sleeping longer," she said, as a shade of sorrow passed over her face.

"Why so, Nellie?"

"Because I have had such a pleasant dream."

"What was it, dear," said Charlene.

"Bring me the picture I showed you yesterday." Charlene brought from a bureau a handsome picture of Captain Wallop, in his military uniform, which he had had taken and sent to Nellie only a few weeks before. It was the likeness of a large well-proportioned military officer, the features clear and the face both handsome and generous, or at least so thought Charlene. Nellie gazed on the life-like features for a long while, and then turning to her companion said:

"I believe he is yet alive."

"Why so?" said Charlene in astonishment.

“I saw him in my sleep in a deep dark valley, with a great monster animal pursuing him. He was weak and pale, but he escaped up the hillside where he was met by a great many soldiers who took him up on their shoulders and carried him to a great white house and laid him on a soft white bed. He then commenced calling my name and beckoned to me, and I knew his voice as well as I used to when we were children together. I started to go to him and he looked toward me and smiled so kindly. I was gazing on his face when I awoke. This is why I said I wish I could have remained asleep.”

Nellie now arose from her bed, and for the first time in three days was able to partake of food. After breakfast, the two cousins locked arms and strolled down the road, Charlene using all her energies to revive the drooping spirits of her companion and to encourage the slight hope inspired by the dream.

Nellie by force of habit gazed down the road leading to the village post-office, and saw, far down, a messenger boy hurrying toward them. Her heart sank within her, her limbs trembled, and a chill ran through her very soul, and now too weak to stand up she sat down on the dry leaves. Again her cousin used her best efforts to encourage her, but the time seemed so long to them both. At last he reached the spot, and was in the act of passing them when Charlene asked him for whom was he looking. He drew an envelope from his pocket and after glancing at it answered :

“Miss Nellie Clayborn.”

“This is she,” exclaimed Charlene, reaching for the little yellow paper.

She looked an instant at the envelope, and without the remotest idea of its contents, ventured the exclamation “good news,” for the look in Nellie’s face frightened her.

She did not hand the message to its owner, but tore it open, and after skipping the words Hospital No.—, Louisville, Ky., read the dispatch as follows :

“Am better, surgeon says he is hopeful of my recovery. Long ride on train did no injury.

“THEOPHILUS.”

On hearing the name of the author of the dispatch read, Nellie though weak and faint arose from the ground like a bird, and clasped her arms around Charlene’s neck, and for the first time in four days tears streamed down her pale cheeks. She uttered the word “Theophilus” in such tender accents that both wept for joy. They dropped upon their knees and thanked heaven for the new hope inspired by the message. They prayed earnestly for the safe recovery of the two wounded soldiers. Charlene proposed that they return to the house and give the good news to Mr. Clayborn and Aunt Rose.

“No,” said Nellie, you go back, but I must go to Mrs. Wallop; and with step and heart light she hurried across the pastures like a fairy, and found the poor distressed woman leaning over the gate.

It took but a moment for Nellie to impart the hopeful news to the heart-broken mother, and a scene of joy occurred that Nellie could

not refer to in after years without her lustrous eyes dimming with tears.

It was on the Saturday evening following that two neatly-clad and heavily-veiled females called at the —— hospital, Louisville, Ky., and were admitted to the quarters of the surgeon in charge.

“Is there a wounded soldier here in your charge by the name of Clayborn?” inquired the taller lady.

“I will ask the steward,” answered the soldier to whom the question was put.

He went hurriedly away and soon returned accompanied by the steward who was no other than Dick Spooner. He was no longer a youthful boy but a handsome and manly looking soldier, a fine glowing face but somewhat darkened by a southern sun.

“Dick, God bless you,” said Nellie as she raised her veil and extended her two little white hands to him.

For a moment he was motionless with astonishment, but recovering he impressed a kiss on the pale white lips now near his face.

“Nellie, Nellie,” he exclaimed, “how did you get here among these sick and wounded soldiers?”

“I could remain at home no longer, how is brother?” she said.

“O he’s a flying, Joe is getting well,” and the same fascinating smile, though now somewhat obstructed by a neat and heavy grown mustache, came across his face as he answered.

“Can we see him?” said Nellie.

“Not for a while for the surgeon is dressing his wound, but be seated and I will take you to his cot soon.”

The two ladies were in the act of taking seats, when Nellie said :

“Excuse me, Dick, for I am nervous, and allow me to introduce you to my cousin, Miss Rivers.”

Dick lifted his cap and bowed gracefully to the young lady who modestly returned his salutation, when he extended his hand and said :

“Miss Rivers, I am most happy to meet you, for Joe and I have talked so much about you that I would almost have deserted the army to see you.”

“Thank you,” said Charlene, blushing.

“I presume you and Nellie have been very happy together,” he said.

“Very indeed,” she answered, “until her recent trouble.”

“The occasion for trouble is now past, and I want to see that sweet face turn rosy again,” said Dick, looking at the pale features of Nellie.

“What is the latest news from Captain Wallop?” asked Miss Rivers, knowing what was uppermost in her companion’s mind.

“I have not seen him for months and had no letter from him in six weeks,” was the reply, and again he fastened his bright eyes on Nellie.

“Have you not heard that he was seriously wounded at Altoona?” Charlene inquired.

“No, indeed, I have not,” he answered, as the blood left his face.

Nellie, without uttering a word, took from beneath her veil the telegram she had received from Theophilus a few days before and handed it to him. Dick looked troubled and serious and then said :

“Wonder if he is in this hospital among the dangerously wounded?”

“He must be,” answered Nellie, as a melancholy shadow overspread her face.

“Please remain here a moment till I see if I can learn anything about him,” said Dick, as he left them. He was absent but a little while when he returned, and as he came in was whistling “Yankee Doodle.” The sad features of Nellie at once changed, her eyes brightened as she arose to hear the news.

“Getting better,” he said, before he had reached the inside of the room. You must not see him to-night the surgeon says, but come in the morning when he is free from fever.” There was a little disappointment in this last statement, as he noticed on Nellie’s features when he said:

“Now, Nellie, you must be more cheerful for to-morrow we will all see Theophilus, and we will go now and see Joe.”

Dick leading the way Nellie and Charlene followed. They passed down a narrow aisle, on either side were double rows of cots on each of which lay a sick or wounded soldier. The passage was a long one, and the pale faces on the cots made the two girls feel sad indeed.

At last they turned to the right and into another hall, and at the corner of a little room sat Joe on his cot reading a paper, for the room was well lighted. Nellie’s eye caught sight of her brother’s pale face, and she darted forward with a suppressed cry of joy, and in a moment more brother and sister were in each other’s embrace. Many times did she kiss his hand and brow while tears of joy filled both their eyes. Dick and Charlene, who were left stand-

ing side by side, were much affected by the scene.

After the affectionate greeting of Joe and his sister, he was introduced to his cousin and a long interview pleasant to all occurred. When the hour for "lights out" came, the two young ladies accompanied by Dick took their leave and repaired to the Gault House where they had secured lodging. To say that Dick was supremely happy would be a mild statement in that regard. He did not apprehend that either of his companions would die from their wounds, he had served his country faithfully for three years, and was looking daily for his final discharge. He was on the eve of returning to his friends, and the sight of Nellie's handsome face and that of her cousin had filled him with new life and aspirations. He remained in the parlor of the hotel till late in the night, talking over things of the past and his varied experiences in the war.

After Dick had bade them good-night, Charlene insisted on retiring early, for well she knew Nellie would require sleep to enable her to pass the ordeal of the next day. But Nellie could not sleep, for it was the great occasion of her life. To meet her lover after so much anxiety, and all that had happened in his absence, would be trying on her nerves; but now that he was almost at death's door, she was fearful that she would not be able to conduct herself so as not to excite him and his injury. She passed a restless and sleepless night except a short while in the morning. Charlene took great pains, after they had eaten a very light breakfast, in arranging Nellie's golden hair, and rubbed her cheeks to

bring the crimson blood to the surface, but to no purpose. Dick met them at the surgeon's quarters at nine o'clock in the morning, and after a few words he led them through the long passage ways, but this time turning to the left.

Dick had not yet seen the captain, and left the ladies in the aisle till he found him. He was not long in discovering his prostrate comrade on a cot near one end of the room. The two shook hands gently but warmly, and after a few words of greeting, Dick beckoned the ladies to him.

Nellie was already shivering like a leaf in autumn, while Charlene was whispering in her ear to be brave. They moved gently forward for all around them was pain and death. Captain Wallop fastened his dark blue eyes on the little trembling form approaching him, her face was colorless, but her black and piercing eyes told him plainly that it was his darling Nellie. She knelt down by his cot in front of the white pillow, placed one white hand in his and the other tenderly on his pale brow. She silently but fervently kissed his brave lips. He placed his arm around her white neck, and pressed her upon his throbbing bosom, but all was as silent as the tomb. Great tears came from his eyes while his lips quivered as he spoke. "Nellie, Nellie," was all he could say. She answered while sobbing, her heart full of love and pity:

"Theophilus, you will live for my sake will you not?"

"Yes, darling, if God wills it."

Nellie remembering Charlene's words, and that she was in the presence of many brave

boys almost wounded to death, arose from the cot and presented to her lover her cousin, who through her tears shook his hand gently and kissed his forehead. Theophilus though too weak to talk, except in a very low tone, greeted the young lady cordially for he had come to regard her almost as Nellie's sister. Nellie asked Dick if the authorities would allow her lover to be removed to a room at the hotel. He answered that he would find out, and while he was consulting those in charge, Nellie returned to the cot and while gently stroking his hair obtained his ready consent to be removed to a room at the hotel.

That afternoon both Joe and Theophilus shook hands with each other in the hotel, and while occupying separate rooms for ten days they remained in the tender care of a first-class surgeon, Dick, Charlene, and Nellie. The small bone of Joe's leg had been fractured but not so badly as to require amputation and the flesh wound in his arm was giving him but little trouble. Captain Wallop had been wounded in the right breast, a minie-ball passing through his lung. When the ball struck him he had bled profusely until he had fainted and lost consciousness. He was discovered in the ditch where he fell by Lieutenant Hill, and cared for by him until sent North early the following morning, while Joe came on the evening train.

Every comfort that the hotel could obtain was furnished the two soldiers, and Theophilus enjoyed one more than is usually allotted to mortals in his condition, for Nellie was hourly by his side ministering to every want. Each day he grew stronger, and with his im-

provement the sad face of Nellie changed, and the rosy cheeks came back again, while her eyes beamed brightly as in days before.

Each day she would sit by his bedside and gaze into his manly face, while her heart was full of tender but ardent love for him, and he would hold her little hand in his and feast his soul on her sweet smiles and gentle looks.

The day had come when Joe no longer required the aid of his physician, when he could return to his home with an honorable discharge from his country's service. Theophilus was yet too weak to leave his room, and it was agreed that Dick should continue with him till all possible danger was past. Nellie was spending her last hour with her lover before she left him in the care of Dick. They were alone. At his request she sang, softly and sweetly, "The Swanee River." It had been four long troubled years since he had heard such music and it thrilled his very soul. He looked into her sweet face and tenderly asked her if, when his next battle was successfully fought, she would be his forever.

"What battle do you yet have to fight, pray?"

"The awful charge that I stole Surrilda Pepper's money."

"You are already free of that charge in my mind."

"I know it, dear," he said, "but I must be vindicated before I can look your good father in the face and ask for your hand."

"Then as you like, Theophilus, for I love you better than all else on earth." Again and again he kissed her and the two happy souls parted. That afternoon he dictated and

Dick wrote his resignation as captain of his company on account of his wound, while Joe and the two happy girls were traveling homeward.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE war was over. The boys in blue were returning from the field of strife and blood. Cannons were firing, flags waving, and the three comrades had been at home many months. Theophilus had made his good mother happy by returning to her restored in health and wearing well-earned laurels as an officer in the army, as well as an honorable scar. He did not again live at his old home, for he felt, when there, that he was a trespasser. In company with his mother he visited the family cemetery, where he was again and again assured of his father's intention to change the hastily made will had he not died so suddenly. He had met his brother and offered him his hand, but with a snarl and savage look Samuel had turned away and left him.

The June term of the —— Circuit court was in session. Two important cases were for trial which had attracted a great number of spectators. Judge Bicknell presided. These cases were, viz: “The State of Indiana *vs* Theophilus Wallop, indictment for grand larceny; and Theophilus Wallop *vs* Samuel Wallop, in which the plaintiff claimed to be the owner of all the property, amounting to fifteen thousand dollars, which had been owned by the late Anthony Wallop. Surl & Creep, attorneys, assisted the prosecutor, Major Simpson; while Thomas R. Crowbar represented the

defendant. It was agreed by counsel that the court and jury should hear the evidence in the State's cause and that the will, and facts surrounding its execution, of Anthony Wallop, deceased, should be given in evidence to the court, and that after the jury had given its verdict in the State's case, then upon all the evidence heard the court should decide the civil suit. A great number of witnesses were in attendance. The jury was impanelled and sworn to try the case, after the defendant had pleaded not guilty to the charge.

Surrilda Pepper was the first witness for the prosecution. She gave an account of the transaction, and fully identified the prisoner as the young man who staid at her house the night before she missed the money.

She looked at the young captain, now handsomely attired, and a shudder passed over her as she glanced at his earnest eyes, fixed upon hers.

She told her pathetic story, occasionally shedding a few tears, and was going into the details of her dream, when Mr. Crowbar objected, insisting that the case should be tried on facts, not visions. The court sustained the objection and admonished the witness to tell what she saw and heard while awake. Major Simpson very triumphantly turned the witness over for cross-examination.

"Had you ever seen the prisoner before the time your money was taken?" asked Mr. Crowbar.

"No sir, and have never seen him since till now."

"Had you shown your money to anyone recently before it was taken?"

“Yes, my sister had seen it.”

“When had your sister seen the money before it was taken?”

“On the Sunday before.”

“How did she come to see it?”

“I showed it to her, how do you suppose she saw it?”

“Who else were present?”

“Reuben and Jerry Halter, sitting over there;” at which Mr. Crowbar looked at the young man inquiringly for a moment and then turning to the witness said:

“Reuben is your husband, I believe.”

“Yes, he is supposed to be.”

“There is no doubt about that is there?”

“Guess not,” said Mrs. Pepper, as she made a face at the attorney.

“What kind of money was it that you lost?” asked Mr. Crowbar.

“It was nearly all gold.”

“What was it wrapped in?”

“It was in my ‘redicule.’”

“Where did you get the reticule?”

“That is none of your business,” said the witness sharply.

“Answer the question,” interposed the court.

“Well, if he must know, I brought the ‘redicule’ with me from Calliner.”

“Had it marks of any kind on it?”

“It had my name on it sewed into the goods.”

Here again Mr. Crowbar turned his large brown eyes on Samuel Wallop who was sitting near Mr. Creep, who was taking notes of the evidence and occasionally glancing wisely about the room. Samuel was tearing up a

piece of paper and throwing it upon the floor (much to the distress of the bailiff who did the sweeping) and did not lift his eyes.

“Would you know the reticule if you were to see it again?” inquired the defendant’s attorney.

“Know it? I would know it anywhere,” was the answer.

Mr. Crowbar took from beneath his chair a small valise, which he very slowly and deliberately unlocked, while the crowd of spectators looked eagerly on at the proceedings. The lawyer unfolded a faded piece of goods, to which was attached a string at two sides, which he laid lightly in Surrilda’s lap. Her little eyes glistened and seizing it in her hands, she plunged her bony fingers into it as if she expected to get her money back again. She turned it inside out and on discovering her own name, she instantly exclaimed, “Reuben, this is it!”

“You are certain of it, Mrs. Pepper?” said Mr. Crowbar.

“Yes, I know it. Where did you get it?”

“You will learn later,” answered the lawyer.

Mrs. Pepper was dismissed from the stand, when Reuben, her husband, came forward. He wore his easy contented look, and with deliberate step took the stand.

“You are the husband of Surrilda Pepper?” said the prosecutor.

“Yes.”

“Where do you live?”

“In Stamper’s Creek township, this county.”

“Did you live there in June and July, 1860?”

“Yes sir, I do not change my residence like some people,” said Mr. Pepper, looking at Captain Wallop, while Mr. Creep winked at his associate counsel.

“Where was you the night your wife’s money was stolen?”

“I was at home in bed, sir.”

“Who staid all night with you that night, if anyone.”

“That man you call Wallop,” said he, pointing his closed knife toward where the prisoner was sitting.

“What did the young man do that night, unusual if anything?”

“Don’t know, sir, I was asleep, but he left the next morning before breakfast.”

“When did you learn that your wife’s money had been stolen?”

“Next day after dinner.”

“What did you do at that time?”

“Went to the house and examined the ground about the spring house where the money had been hid by my old woman.”

“What did you find?”

“I found a pretty large track made by a person wearing a big shoe or boot.”

“Did you measure the tracks?”

“Yes sir.”

“Can you give the size of the track to the jury?”

“Yes sir, the track was ten inches long, three inches across the ball of the foot, and one and three-quarter inches across the heel.”

“Have you ever compared the measurements you made with shoes worn by the defendant?”

“Yes sir, about a week after the crime I

measured an old pair of his shoes and I am sure it was the same size of the track."

"Take the witness," said Major Simpson.

"Where did you see the prisoner's shoes?" asked Mr. Crowbar.

"At my house," said the witness.

"Who brought them there?"

"Samuel Wallop, the prisoner's brother."

"Was anyone with Samuel when he came?"

"Yes sir, Jerry Halter was with him."

"What time in the day did Halter and Samuel arrive at your house?"

"They came after night, nearly midnight, I believe."

"When did they go away again?"

"In about an hour."

"You did the measuring of the tracks while one of them held the light didn't you?"

"No sir, Samuel measured the shoes while I held the light."

"You then measured the track at the spring house?" asked the lawyer.

"No sir, the track had partly disappeared by that time."

"This track in the mud near the spring house is the only track you saw, was it, Mr. Pepper?"

"No sir, I did not say that."

"Then what other tracks did you see?"

"I did not see any other track made by a man."

"What was the track made by that you saw, and where did you see it?"

"I think, gentlemen of the jury, that the prisoner had an 'accomplish' with him when he got the money," said Mr. Pepper, as he turned

facing the jury, "for there had been a horse hitched purty close by."

"Where had this horse been hitched?" said counsel for the defense.

"About a hundred yards from our spring house, to a tree."

"You could not see the horse's tracks very plainly, could you?" said Mr. Crowbar mechanically.

"Yes, I could, Mr. Lawyer, and its no use for you to try to get your man out of this scrape by disputing my word."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pepper, I was merely suggesting."

"Well, then you ask me plain questions and I will tell you the truth."

"Very well, Mr. Pepper, you will now be kind enough to describe the horse tracks you saw to the jury."

"I object," said the prosecutor. "It is a man we are trying and not a horse."

"The question is competent," said the court, "proceed with the evidence."

"Well," continued the witness, "I saw several tracks made by a horse, and I measured them."

"What was the size of them?" asked the defendant's attorney.

"Well, sir, one of the tracks was four inches and a half wide and five and three-quarter inches long."

"Will you please look at this," said Mr. Crowbar, handing the witness a partly worn horseshoe which the witness examined for a moment, then said:

"This is a shoe that has been on the foot of a horse."

“Will you please measure the length and width of that shoe?” said the lawyer, handing witness a two-foot rule.

Again the attorney for the state objected, but the court overruled the objection with the statement that it was a proper cross examination.

“This shoe,” continued the witness, “is just the size of the track I measured.”

Here the witness was dismissed, and he left the stand believing that he had very much damaged the defendant and furnished a basis to convict someone else connected with him in the commission of the offense.

Mr. Grewel was the next witness, and after stating that he had come all the way from Missouri to testify, gave his statement, fully identifying the prisoner as the person who had worked for him, with the conduct and statements of the prisoner at the time he saw him. He was not cross-examined, and the state rested its case.

“Call Jerry Halter as our first witness,” said Mr. Crowbar.

He came forward, his face flushed, for he had cultivated the habit of using intoxicating liquor, and on this occasion was considerably under its influence.

“Will you please examine this pair of boots?” said Mr. Crowbar, while he handed the witness a pair of calf-skin boots considerably worn.

“I’ll look at ’em,” said the witness, first turning the bottoms upward, then sitting them down by his side.

“Please tell the jury whose property they are now or have been, if you know.”

Again the prosecutor objected, unless the

defense would disclose the purpose of the testimony; this the court would not do, but admonished the witness that he would not compel him to give any testimony which would tend to convict himself. This matter settled, the counsel for defense again asked the question.

“Spect they were mine, ’bout my size, but can’t say (hic) zacly, but think they are mine.”

With this short testimony he was dismissed.

Here the boots, which were the exact size of the tracks left at the spring house, were shown to the jury.

Oliver Latemeal testified to the occasion of the larceny, and described a horse with three white feet going and returning from the place of the crime on the night of its commission. He also testified that the horseshoe in court fitted the measurement of the track of the same horse.

He said he had first seen the shoe in a blacksmith shop some six miles east of where Mr. Pepper lived, and that he now recognized it by a file mark he had then placed upon it.

Jesse Taylor was the next witness. He said he was a blacksmith by trade, that in 1860 he kept a shop some six miles east of Mr. Pepper’s. The horseshoe that was now in court had been in his possession since about three weeks after the crime.

“State, if you please, Mr. Taylor, where and how you came in possession of the shoe,” asked Mr. Crowbar.

“I took the shoe off a horse at the time belonging to Mrs. Charity McSquint.”

“Who had the horse at your shop?”

“Jerry Halter, who lived with her at the time.”

“Describe the horse to the jury,” said the lawyer.

“He was a bay horse with three white feet, and was known in the community by the name of ‘stockin’ John.”

Here Clarissy Cutright gave the late Mrs. McSquint a withering look, which made the latter return the compliment with a distorted countenance such as only Charity could when she felt an extreme contempt for one.

“You may state, Mr. Taylor, whether you saw any persons on the evening of the day when the crime is said to have been committed, going in the direction of Mr. Pepper’s residence?”

“Yes sir, I saw the defendant Wallop going past my shop about five o’clock in the evening.”

“State whether you saw anyone else the same day, if so give their names to the jury.”

“I saw Jerry Halter and Sam Wallop near my shop a little after sundown of that day.”

“What were they doing?”

“Samuel was walking when I first saw him, and Halter was riding the ‘stockin’ John horse, both coming along a path from the south, when they came to the road they turned west.”

“Where were you at the time?”

“I was on the inside of my shop and saw them through a crevice.”

He was cross-examined at great length, went over his story again, and gave as his reason for keeping the shoe in his possession so long, that it was at the suggestion of Mr.

Latemeal who gave it as his opinion that the accused was not the guilty party.

A great number of witnesses then testified to the good character of the prisoner for honesty prior to the charge.

Aaron Flint was then called, he gave a detailed account of the burning of Anthony Wallop's house, the finding of the reticule behind the window casing of Samuel's room, and then described the actions of Samuel when he arrived. His evidence was given slowly and candidly and made a great impression on the audience and officers of the court. Samuel Wallop, who up to this time had been pale and quiet, now turned red in the face, and it was plain that he was much excited.

Dick Spooner was the next witness. It required quite an effort on the part of the bailiff to quiet the spectators, for it had become known that he was an important witness for the defense. Dick was in a happy mood for the evidence of Mr. Taylor was new to him, and it supplied a missing link he had not been able to discover.

He said that he had been acquainted with the parties all his life, and in a clear voice testified to all the facts he had learned while investigating the matter before going into the army. He had given his statement as to his measurements of the horse "stockin' John," the overheard conversations between Samuel and Halter, the night trip of Halter to the fallen oak tree, and was giving the facts connected with the finding of the empty reticule, when an unusual court scene occurred. Samuel Wallop arose from his seat his frame quivering, his face flushed, and tears running down

his thin face. He gave a wild shriek, and flinging his arms over his head he yelled in agonizing tones: "Take him away! Dick Spooner is going to shoot me." He then let fall a string of oaths on the prisoner, and again yelled most piteously for Jerry Halter to help him. The bailiff and bystanders took him from the room, but not without a struggle. Dick concluded his testimony, and the defense rested. The prosecution offered no rebuttal testimony, but promptly offered to dismiss the prosecution. "No," said Mr. Crowbar, "my client is not willing that this black charge which has followed him for years shall now be dismissed; he desires a verdict from his countrymen which will vindicate him for all time."

"The defendant is entitled to a verdict in the cause one way or the other," said the court.

"We are ready to return a verdict without leaving the box," said the foreman of the jury, and they did, finding the defendant not guilty.

This was the occasion for a burst of applause from the bystanders which the court tried in vain to stop, but gave a few minutes recess during which Captain Wallop was the recipient of many congratulations.

"Are you now ready to dispose of the civil suit?" said the court to the attorneys, after again calling to order.

"We are ready for the plaintiff," said Mr. Crowbar.

"Call the Rev. Jehew Thornbush," said Surl.

"What other evidence does the plaintiff wish to present?" said the court.

“We wish to read the will of the late Anthony Wallop,” said Mr. Crowbar, “if Brother Thornbush will be kind enough to give it to me.” The minister handed the document to the plaintiff’s attorney, who read it in a clear tone as follows :

I, Anthony Wallop, being of sound mind and disposing memory, and recognizing my duty to an all-wise Creator, and my responsibility to a family intrusted to my care, do make and publish this my last will and testament, hereby revoking all former wills by me at any time made.

First. I will that all my just debts and funeral expenses be paid out of any money I may have on hand at the time of my death.

Item second. It is my will that five thousand dollars in government bonds now belonging to me, shall on my death be placed in the ——— Louisville, Kentucky, bank, to be there kept till my executor may be ordered to pay the same to my beloved son, on the final settlement of my estate, *who has lived an honest life to that date.*

Item third. It is my will that my other son, who has been *guilty* of the crime of stealing about six hundred dollars of money belonging to Surrilda Pepper, take *no part* or *parcel* of my estate, and that when *proof* of such guilt shall be satisfactorily made to the court, then all my property both personal and real, to which my beloved wife Elizabeth Wallop is not entitled under the laws of Indiana, shall absolutely belong and be turned over to my *son not guilty of the crime.*

Item fourth. I hereby appoint my friend and adviser Rev. Jehew Thornbush my execu-

tor, and direct him to carry out the provisions of my will as soon after my death as practicable.

his

ANTHONY X WALLOP.

mark.

Attest : J. THORNBUSH.

Witnesses :

JERRY HALTER,

SAMUEL WALLOP.

Samuel had returned to the room accompanied by the bailiff in a calmer mood, but he was very nervous and excited. Halter had left the court room long before the verdict of the jury had been rendered.

Samuel had returned in time to hear the will read, and had kept his eyes close on Mr. Crowbar during the time.

“May it please the court,” said the attorney after reading the will, “we are now ready to submit the case on the testimony heard in the State’s cause and on the will as it *reads*.”

“No,” said Mr. Surl, “we desire to prove by Mr. Thornbush and others that the *guilty son* mentioned in the third item of the will *meant Theophilus Wallop* who was then charged with the crime.”

“And if it were competent,” answered Mr. Crowbar, “we are equally able to prove that the deceased, at the timely suggestion of his good wife purposely omitted to name *either* of his *sons* as guilty of the crime, but left that matter open for *proof* as the will states.”

“Gentlemen,” said the court, after carefully reading the will, “the law does not allow, as a rule, parol testimony to be given to establish the purpose and intention of the testator at

the time of the making of his will, especially so when the purpose and intent can be gathered from the language of the will itself. From a careful reading of this will, it seems that it was written under a belief that *one* of the testator's sons had committed the crime of *larceny*, and therefore had forfeited his right to share in the estate, but he does not mention the name of the guilty one.

“You will notice that he does not use the language ‘*charged* with the crime,’ but ‘*guilty* of the crime,’ and then lets the disinheritance rest on the fact of satisfactory proof being made of guilt. This being the fair construction of the will, and by the agreement of the parties that the testimony heard in the State cause should be regarded as part of the evidence in this case, the court finds that *Samuel Wallop was guilty* of the larceny of Surrilda Pepper's money, with one *Jerry Halter*, and were it not for the fact that the statute of limitations comes to their relief they could be yet tried and punished for the offense. In this case, however, the court finds for the plaintiff, Theophilus Wallop, and that under his father's will he is entitled to the entire estate, subject to his mother's interest, and that the defendant, Samuel Wallop, is by virtue of his crime and father's will disinherited and entitled to no part thereof.”

“The executor is directed to at once turn over the property to the plaintiff, take his receipt, and make his final report to court.”

When the court had finished its judgment a moment of silence followed. All eyes were turned upon Samuel, on whose face the large veins began to grow. The muscles of his

hands and face twitched convulsively, he gazed at the court wildly, and again broke forth in a storm of profanity. He was again taken charge of by the officers, and this time confined in jail. Again was Captain Wallop congratulated, but he was very sober and quiet. After the proceedings were at an end, he, in company with his mother and Dick, marched away from the curious crowd.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Rev. Jehew Thornbush and his wife silently left the court scene in which Captain Wallop had been so triumphantly acquitted, greatly humiliated. The minister had not been among the number who had extended a hand to the young soldier who had emerged from the disgraceful charge, for he could only remember him as a disobedient youth and a fugitive from justice. Charity relieved her pent-up wrath by abusing the court, jury, and witnesses.

When they arrived at home, they found Jerry stretched out on the bed in a drunken stupor, where, for the present, he was allowed to remain.

It was the next morning, however, when matters at the minister's house had assumed a serious aspect. Jerry was again lying on the bed, now duly sober, but with many bruises and marks on his body. His face was pale, and he was scarcely able to turn in the bed.

Charity sat by him moaning and nervous, while Mr. Thornbush was reading a short and badly-written paper. It was not one of those sad afflictions which naturally befall happy

families, and which causes the neighbors to hurry to their assistance. It was at an early hour in the morning of the preceding day, when all of the household were lost in sleep, that a half-dozen masked men entered the quiet home, and without as much as asking leave, dragged Jerry from his couch, and notwithstanding the screams of his godmother, took him to the woods near by, and after forcing him to confess to the crime of stealing Mrs. Pepper's money, they "regulated" him in oriental style, and took him back to the house, where they left him, with a notice to leave the country in ten days or receive another visit at the end of that time. Brother Thornbush was reading this notice with interest, for in a postscript there was added this significant sentence: "now, '*jahauk thistle*,' if you and old '*chat McSquint*' harbors that thief Halter about your premises ten days more, then we will pay you and her our regards.

"J. Linch."

Who the parties were who had taken the law in their own hands, and "regulated" Halter was never certainly known, but they were generally supposed to be citizens of an adjoining county, who were spectators at the trial.

It was a week later. The night was dark, with the misty rain slowly descending to the earth. "Stockin'" John was saddled, and Jerry Halter, with an old valise in his hand, after saying good-bye to Charity, mounted the horse, and with the minister on behind him, started in a westerly course, leaving the scenes of his childhood and checkered career behind him. Brother Thornbush returned late

the following afternoon, but if Jerry Halter ever afterward returned to Indiana the fact was unknown to his former acquaintances.

Some three years later it was learned that he was an inmate of the Jefferson City, Missouri, penitentiary, placed there for robbing a farmer, and this was the last that is known of his history.

Samuel Wallop grew worse in his ravings from week to week until he was finally adjudged insane, and was then placed in the asylum at the city of Indianapolis, where, two years later, he died of what the physicians pronounced softening of the brain. He had received, however, the kindest care from his mother and brother, but the sight of Theophilus always set him to raving with excitement,

Reuben and Surrilda were much surprised to learn that the parties who had stolen their money were Samuel Wallop and Jerry Halter, but now that the fact had been established, Reuben could recollect that at the time the money was exhibited to his sister-in-law, and while he and Jerry Halter had gone to get "Stockin'" John from the stable, Jerry lingered behind, watching the movements of his wife, and he wondered why he had been so stupid as not to have suspicioned him of the crime.

No one in the community had rejoiced more at the complete vindication of Captain Wallop than Dick Spooner; and he had become very popular on account of his effort to bring the result about. Many of his old friends had persuaded him to enter the government service as a detective, while others disapproved the step. Captain Wallop was among the number

who did not wish Dick to leave the neighborhood, for he felt that he owed him a debt of gratitude which he hoped he might pay by Dick's remaining. Mr. Clayborn and Mr. Flint had each advised Dick that, now the war was over, there would be many places of trust and profit for him among his friends in the country. He was undecided, and laid his case before Nellie and her cousin. Nellie very promptly and kindly urged him to remain among his acquaintances, but what Charlene said to him remains a secret, for their interviews were not always heard by others. He did not become a detective, however, for when the Fourth of July came, there was a great celebration in the Clayborn grove where Dick and Nellie used to ramble and devise plans to ascertain who had stolen the lost money.

The people gathered from a great distance, and it was said that but two people (Jehew Thornbush and his wife) in a radius of ten miles remained away from the celebration. The new minister, Rev. Paul Lovejoy, was the orator of the day and master of ceremonies. He had succeeded the Rev. Mr. Thornbush, who had become an enfeebled and chronic grumbler at the new-fangled ideas of the people. The new minister had very much offended Brother Thornbush by a sermon he had preached on one occasion. In this sermon the new minister had denounced the husband who whipped his wife as a brute, and had spoken of that system of constant torture of children with instruments of cruelty as a relic of barbarism. He had argued that appeals to the intelligence, and kindly treatment of the young were much more effective in the bringing them up to honorable

lives. He did not believe that corporal punishment could be entirely abolished, but he insisted that it should only occur in extreme cases, and then with great caution. He described a home of scolding and switches as a place of darkness, from which the children would flee at an early period of life. He then painted a home where love ruled supreme, where smiles and sunshine lighted every corner, and compared it to that home beyond the sky where all is joy and peace. He had referred to the advocates of despotic home government as fossils and misguided people, consequently Brother Thornbush was not on such terms with the new minister as to require his attendance at the celebration. It was after the speech of the day was made that the minister stepped down from the rudely-constructed platform, and walked some little distance to a large beech tree, in the bark of which, years before, had been cut the letters "T. W." and "N. C."

Here, beneath the leafy branches of the tree which had been the silent witness of their childish love, which ripened as the letters in the tree, as well as themselves, grew larger, Theophilus Wallop and Nellie Clayborn were joined in marriage. The congratulations extended the pair were hearty and many; but a little temporary confusion was created by Dick Spooner stepping up to the minister with a marriage license in his hand, while Charlene Rivers hung blushing upon his arm.

In five minutes more Dick and Miss Rivers were made man and wife, and while the crowd was surging forward to shake the hands of the happy twain, the minister good-naturedly sang: "A charge to keep I have." The benediction

was said, and four happy souls started on a new career in their existence.

Ten years after the marriage of Captain Wallop, the writer visited the Clayborn neighborhood. Joe Clayborn was a member of the Indiana Legislature, and was known as the "bachelor" member of —— County.

Dick Spooner was entering on his second term as Auditor of the County, and owned the Anthony Wallop farm, which he had, on easy terms, purchased of Captain Wallop, after he had received the estate of his father under the will. Theophilus was now the owner of a large farm, partly given him by Jonathan Clayborn, and partly purchased by his own means, on which grazed quite a number of blooded horses and cattle. He had built a beautiful cottage house, to which he had added two comfortable and spacious rooms for his mother. The house was situated south and near the highway, while a spring of clear water issued from a little elevation near by. There was a porch to the west, from which the home of Jonathan Clayborn, in which he, his sister, and Joseph, yet resided, could be seen, while a veranda ornamented the front. The house was dressed in a white coat of paint, while thrifty evergreen trees standing in regular order added to its beauty.

On either side of the walk leading to the garden and out to the front gate was a row of sweet-smelling flowers, while the little meadow to the east had been newly mown and the breath of which was filling the air. The inside of the house was cosy and neat, while the walls of the rooms were decorated with large pictures of friends, military chieftains, and statesmen.

In the parlor hung the life-size picture of Mother Wallop, in a beautiful frame, while the next largest picture was that of Dick Spooner. Beneath the mother's picture were the words "Our Mother," and under the picture of Spooner were the words "Our Faithful Friend."

On the lap of Captain Wallop there sat a little boy, Dick, and a little girl, Rose. About them were many toys and trinkets, such as delighted their hearts. Over the front door was the motto "God bless our home."

It was after we had eaten such a dinner as as only an expert farmer's wife can prepare, that we took a glance at the home and its surroundings. The furniture was not of mahogany, nor the carpets Brussels, save one, but there was such an air of comfort and elegance about this country home, that we felt interested in it, and said :

"Captain, you have a most lovely home and family."

"Yes sir, I am as well off in this world as Vanderbilt."

"You do not mean that you have as much treasure?"

"Yes sir; but not as much money and property."

"You do not, then, regard money and property as treasure altogether?" said the writer.

"Indeed I do not. I have a home with the surrounding comforts of life, while the inside is full of love and sunshine."

"I see your good old mother lives with you."

"Yes, she contributes to the happiness of our home. I am trying to make her feel as

happy now as she tried to make me when I was a child."

"You have the clouds, tempests, and storms, like others, I presume?"

"We have clouds and sorrow, but we dispense with the luxuries of tempests and storms," said the captain, looking at his mother and smiling.

"What do you do with little Dick, here, when he behaves badly?"

"I take him on my knee and kiss him and speak kindly to him."

"I am afraid that would not be effective with every little boy."

"I had rather risk it than a lick over the little fellow's head," he answered.

"You do not believe in corporal punishment of children, then?" the writer inquired.

"Not to a great extent; a burnt child is afraid of the fire," said the Captain, good-naturedly. "I believe," he continued, "that every child of intelligence has a good and a bad side to its nature, and that it is the parents' duty to to nurse and cultivate the better qualities, and that this can better be done by kind words than by blows."

"Do you not think that there are times when punishment is a necessity?"

"Yes, but that necessity is brought about by inattention to the better qualities which dwell in every intelligent being."

"Do I understand you that children are taught to do wrong by punishing them?"

"They are not taught that, but that is often the effect of punishment. A child may be possessed of a combative nature, and that peculiar quality will grow with the child in proportion

to the amount of beating he gets for it ; while, if his peaceful qualities were kindly cultivated, his tendency to be good-natured would be greatly strengthened."

Here Nellie interrupted the conversation by sitting down on a little stool close by the Captain's side. Her dark eyes were full of a kindly expression, and not a tinge of sorrow appeared upon the happy face. We had shaken hands with Mother Wallop, and the entire family, and were in the act of leaving the model home, when the Captain said : "Wait a moment." We did wait, and listened to the happy mother and children sing in beautiful harmony "Way down upon the Swanee River,"

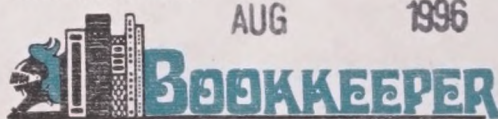
The Captain's face beamed with joy ; and we left that country home fully satisfied that millions of other homes could be improved by filling them with love and smiles, and removing from them frowns, switches, hard words, and instruments of *torture*.

THE END.

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